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Friday
21 March '97

MAJOR GOES TO POLL-Z-Z-Z-Z!

ASHDOWN DEMANDS TO BE ON COVER p. 94

"The Week is magic"

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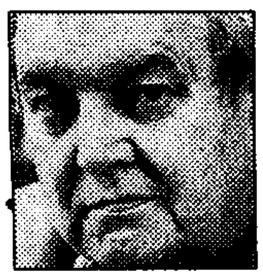

George MacDonald Fraser added: "I would rather spend ten minutes with *The Week* than ten hours with the rest of the media."

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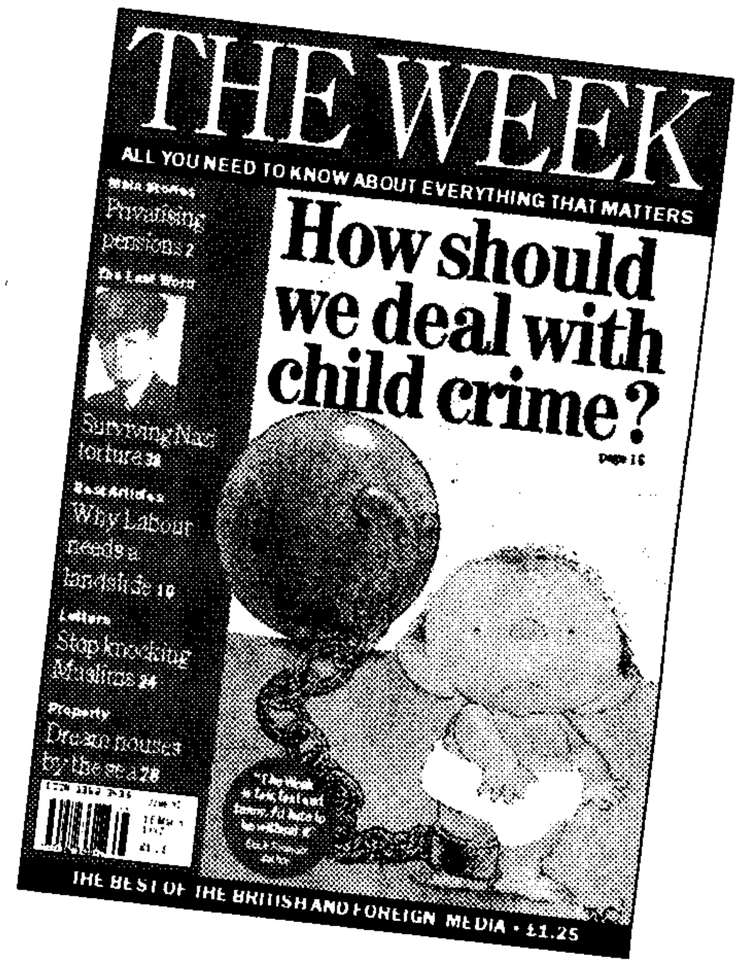
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Gnome

AT LAST! They're off!

After all the weeks of watching and waiting, of expectation and anticipation, of uncertainty and confusion, it is a great relief to tell our journalists that they can now finally run all their pieces headed "At last! They're off!"

And we at the Daily Gnome are particularly delighted that the election campaign has begun.

There have been those who in the past have accused us of political bias and of encouraging the government to delay the election in the hope that its fortunes would improve.

Nothing could be further from the truth — which is why we now intend to devote ourselves to the longest, most detailed and most extensive coverage of all the main parties that has ever been mounted.

For the next six weeks we will leave no stone unturned, no issue undebated, and no speech unanalysed. We are planning thousands of features and millions of words every week.

By the end of the campaign it is the Daily Gnome's earnest and fervent hope that the public will be so totally and utterly bored that they won't bother to vote and that the Tories will scrape in again. *(Shurely shome mishtake? E.S.)*

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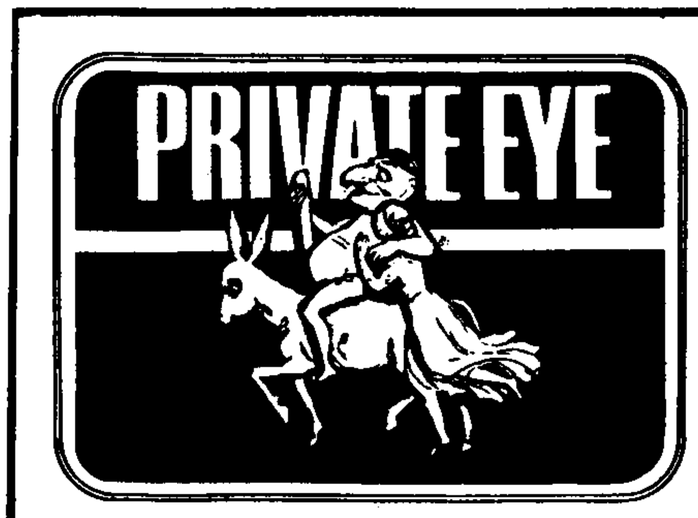

COLOUR SECTION

THE early calling of the general election has caused dismay in the office of Sir Gordon Downey, parliamentary commissioner for standards, who is putting the finishing touches to his long and by all accounts devastating report on the Ian Greer cash-for-questions scandal.

The hopes of Neil Hamilton, liar, cheat and Tory MP for Tatton, soared when he read Downey's report on the allegations made against home secretary Michael Howard by Mohamed Fayed. These allegations (that Howard had been bribed to commission a department of trade inquiry into Fayed's takeover of Harrods) were, said Sir Gordon, completely false. Aha, concluded Hamilton, here was clear proof that Sir Gordon believes Fayed to be an inveterate liar and will therefore discount the Egyptian's allegations against Hamilton.

But wait: before he rejoices Hamilton should read the small print. Downey specifically says in his report that Fayed believed his allegations against Howard to be true, and had good reason for believing it. This caveat is believed to pave the way for Downey's conclusion that Fayed is telling the truth about Hamilton.

What appears to have convinced Sir Gordon more than anything else was the evidence of the Tory MP for Beaconsfield, Tim Smith. Smith revealed that while he was asking questions and busying himself in parliament on behalf of the Fayeds, he had received fat envelopes full of Fayed cash, some of which had been sent to him by courier. The coincidence between this method of payment and the allegations that Hamilton had been paid by Fayed in exactly the same way struck Sir Gordon as more persuasive than Hamilton's fervent denials.

If, as seems inevitable, Hamilton and Smith have been denounced in Sir Gordon's report, what will the Commons select committee on standards do about it? Will it publish the report and, in the few weeks before the election, decide on the penalties for the MPs while they fight for their safe seats? Will pigs fly?

ANOTHER embarrassing matter has dropped in Sir Gordon Downey's in-tray: a letter from a former top government health official accusing health secretary Stephen Dorrell and his minister of state Gerald Malone of misleading parliament.

The letter is from Dr Andrew Watt, a former chief of medicines control in Scotland. He refers to three statements about the letter sent out from the department of health in 1995 warning doctors about likely side-effects from new contraceptive pills.

He alleges that the ministers justified what was later shown to be an entirely wrong decision leading to widespread panic and a huge increase in abortions by giving false dates and false information to parliament. In particular, he says, Malone told parliament (on 19 December 1995) that "the final report of the World Health Organisation was received by the Medicines Control Agency on 6 October". Whoops! The report was not finished until 13 October.

The full story of the official victimisation of Dr Watt for daring to tell the truth about the contraceptive pills scandal appeared in *Eye* 911 last November. The new allegations of "designedly misleading parliament" are unlikely to be looked at before the election.

FORMER foreign secretary Douglas Hurd may find his new job as chairman of the Prison Reform Trust hard to square with his lucrative contracts with NatWest.

The trust's anti-prison privatisation stance would suit the Douglas Hurd who stood out against selling off prisons when he was home secretary. In July 1987 he said: "I do not think there is a call and I do not think the House would accept a case for auctioning or privatising the prisons or handing over the business of keeping prisoners safe to anyone other than government servants."

Once Hurd was no longer a minister he became deputy chair of NatWest Markets and a non-executive director on the board of the National Westminster Bank — and both companies are helping finance the expansion of private health care provision to American jails. The debt facility for Spectrum Healthcare Services, for example, America's largest private provider of "correctional" health care, was arranged by National Westminster Bank. NatWest Markets is now a significant shareholder in the company.

Although Spectrum is not actually running private prisons, city investment bankers like NatWest Markets are rubbing their hands together at the prospect of "correctional" companies like Spectrum as they are seen as a foot in the door of private prisons. Such catering and healthcare firms will lead the way to the giant pot of gold that is prison privatisation, according to city bankers. And as a recent Dallas conference for investors put it: "While arrests and convictions are steadily on the rise, profits are to be made — profits from crime. Get in on the ground floor of this booming industry now." Obviously broad shoulders like Hurd's can reconcile such conflicts.

Meanwhile derivatives trader Kyriacous Papouis, partly blamed for a £90m black hole in NatWest Markets trading book, is being investigated by the Securities and Futures Association and the Bank of England. If things go badly and Mr Papouis were ever to spend time at Her Majesty's pleasure, no doubt he could expect a visit from the new chairman of the Prison Reform Trust, his old boss at NatWest Markets, Douglas Hurd.

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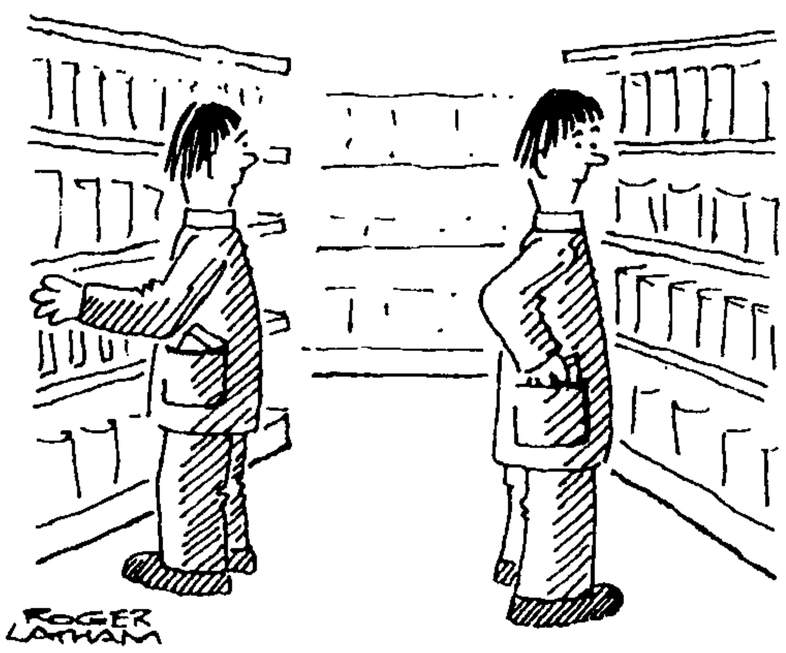


Clergymen Behaving Badly

Street Of Shame

WHEN Tony Blair's press secretary Alastair Campbell was introduced to fashionable novelist Will Self last week, the two looked set to become instant pals.

Satisfied that the "new Martin Amis" loathed the Tories and all their works, Campbell promptly put Self down on his list of glamorous people to be invited to Downing Street to celebrate victory after the election. Self too was pleased by the encounter. He'd been commissioned by *George*, John Kennedy Jr's New York-based political magazine, to write a profile of Britain's next prime minister. Here was a chance to get a face-to-face interview.

Self rang his new spin-doctor chum the next day to make arrangements, only to receive an earful of vitriol. Campbell had run Self's name through the Excalibur instant rebuttal computer, which had spat out an article critical of Blair that Self had written for the *Independent* three years ago, and an account of Self's habit of tuning up his creative imagination by injecting himself with highly unstable pharmaceutical cocktails. The abstemious Campbell, whose idea of a speedball is two teabags in his cuppa, decided the decadent scribbler must never be allowed near his squeaky-clean boss.

Self consulted his inamorata, *Guardian Weekend* editor Deborah Orr, on the proper journalistic response, and set off to "doorstep" Blair outside his Islington house. Seeing the Labour leader arrive with the hostile Campbell, he settled down in his car equipped for a long stakeout — flask of coffee, sandwiches, syringe, etc.

Then, a passing toddler up-ended her tricycle outside the Blair home and sat bawling on the pavement. Self thought the correct, communitarian, "new" Labourish thing to do was to rush to the child's assistance. Campbell, eyeing the scene from Tony's window and witnessing what he thought must be a drug-crazed pervert forcing smack on an unwilling nipper, shot out of the house for a spot of vigorous vigilantism. After a short struggle the shocked novelist went home to play with his chemistry set.

TO MARK the first anniversary of the Dunblane massacre, the *Sun* despatched its star photographer Arthur Edwards (the man who's made a fortune out of stalking Princess Di) and perma-tan hackette Antonella Lazzeri to compile an "eight-page remembrance pull-out".

Lazzeri is well remembered in the town for the fetching mini-skirt and fishnets she wore while covering the massacre. More demurely dressed this time, she visited the family of one of Thomas Hamilton's surviving victims, who was badly wounded in the incident.

After a short chat with the parents, Lazzeri summoned the child downstairs with a cheerful shout of "Come and see your Auntie Nelly!" But when the girl entered the room she froze, transfixed by the sight of the portly, balding and bespectacled photographer. She then burst into floods of tears, screaming "Get that nasty man out of here!"

Alas for him, Arthur Edwards does indeed bear more than a passing resemblance to the late Thomas Hamilton.

Seeing her exclusive going down the pan *(shurely "demonstrating her great compassion"? — Ed.)*, Lazzeri bundled the bemused lensman out of the front door while the parents tried to pacify their traumatised offspring.

PIERS "Boy" Morgan, gormless editor of the *Mirror*, is treating the general election very seriously indeed. Two weeks ago he ordered his senior colleagues not to take any holidays — or even days off — until after 1 May. They must, he said, devote themselves to the task of installing Tony "Boy" Blair in Downing Street.

A couple of days later, an executive wandered into Morgan's office to discuss some important aspect of election coverage — only to find that the editor had disappeared for a week's holiday in Jamaica!

"IT IS. Are you?" In the case of the *Independent on Sunday*, the answer is: probably not. Having sacked half its business staff last week, the paper has effectively abandoned the struggle to produce independent financial coverage.

The dismissals also break pledges by Mirror Group and Newspaper Publishing management that no staff cuts would follow the *IoS*'s deal with the American news agency Bloomberg last month.

Though Bloomberg promised much, to date all it has delivered is statistics and a page of impenetrable market round-ups on currencies, bonds and commodities, which are not of great interest to *Sindie* readers. The paper's business staff — already the smallest of any broadsheet paper, even before the latest sackings — write the rest of the content.

Deputy business and City editor Paul Farrelly, who opposed the so-called "partnership" with Bloomberg from the start, has already resigned and will join the *Observer* as City editor in May. Last week's axing of business hacks David Bowen and Paul Rodgers will leave City editor Ian Griffiths with just two part-time freelances to produce the paper.

He can expect little support from new *IoS* editor Rosie Boycott in resisting the sackings, which were pushed through by Mirror group chiefs and the daily *Indie*'s business editor-in-chief Jeremy Warner. The first Boycott knew of last week's events was when Farrelly burst into an editorial conference to inform her that "two of your staff have been fired".

The *IoS* may be a pawn in a bigger game being played by Bloomberg and the Mirror Group. An accurate story, which suggested that David "Rommel" Montgomery and Michael Bloomberg were hoping to create a rival to the *FT*, was recently dropped from the business section at Boycott's insistence, following denials from Montgomery — who just happens to be Boycott's boss. *Very* independent.

CONGRATULATIONS to the *Guardian* for launching its Bad Press Awards, to be judged by a panel of eminent hacks including Roy Greenslade — best-remembered as the *Daily Mirror* editor who conned his readers with bogus spot-the-ball competitions.

The paper has asked for examples of crappy journalism to be submitted by 8 April. But will readers be allowed to nominate hacks and stories from the *Grauniad* itself? If not, Lord Gnome is happy to make good the deficiency, using the same categories as the *Guardian* Awards:

Most intrusive story: The *Grauniad*'s prurient front-page report on the non-wedding of Liam Gallagher and Patsy Kensit, written by showbiz correspondent Alan Rusbridger.

Most intrusive picture: A huge photo (in the 1 March issue) of the small Cotswold village of Blockley — weekend retreat of publicity-shy *Grauniad* editor Alan Rusbridger.

Most fatuous columnist: Charlotte Raven of the *Grauniad*, for punditry beyond the call of duty when Geri (of the Spice Girls) accidentally flashed her tits at the Brits: "There are various ways of interpreting this. The first is to link it with the feelgood factor and see it as an effect of that mid-boom/post-PC cheerfulness starting to affect our attitude. On the other hand... the whole thing suggests a retreat from progressive values and an acceptance of the status quo. This more or less sums up the nineties, in which we are existing, like Voltaire's Candide, in a state of delusional optimism... Enter Geri Spice Girl and her zeitgeist misinterpreting mammaries."

Further entries — including "Best Literal" — should be sent to Lord Gnome's distinguished panel of judges at once.

THE widespread view that the Archbishop of Canterbury's office is in league with the *Guardian* (and therefore passed the letter about Roisin McAliskey from home office minister Sir David Maclean directly to a *Guardian* journalist) is quite wrong. The letter was leaked first to the *Independent*, which spiked it.

"I predict that Mystic Meg will get all her predictions wrong..."

YET more cost-cutting is expected at the *Financial Times* following the discovery that its parent company — the Pearson group — has accidentally mislaid £100m (see Books & Bookmen). This is on top of last year's purge which made 10 percent of the hacks redundant, including the entire picture desk.

The next *Blitzkrieg* seems likely to eliminate coverage of the UK's regions altogether. The northern correspondent has already gone, soon to be followed by the South-west and Wales. The present incumbent of the Bristol office, Roland Adburgham, has "taken early retirement".

And who can blame him? In a plaintive memo to HQ a couple of months ago, Adburgham revealed that the *FT* hadn't paid his office paper bill since May 1996, with the result that the local wholesaler was now refusing to supply any newspapers at all. "Another difficulty," he added, "is that there is now no office float. I have to buy cleaning materials, toner for printers/fax and photocopier, stationery items etc on my own expense. This might not be too serious if London promptly refunded my expenses. This has not happened."

Meanwhile the editing of the *FT* goes from bad to worse. Julia Cuthbertson, *née* Murphy, who survived the exposure of her suspected insider dealing (*Eyes passim*), is still news editor — but probably not for much longer to judge by her instructions to hacks who are involved in general election coverage.

In a memo picking out some of the more interesting candidates and constituencies, she makes her priorities all too clear: "Lorna Fitzgerald — Another former NUS president, fighting another Lancashire seat. Photogenic... Ruth Berry, 21 — youngest candidate in UK and very photogenic..."

She also shows why the *FT* has such a well-earned reputation for journalistic objectivity: "Alan Sked, LSE lecturer and all-round teapot... PUTNEY: Revolting Mellor v. appalling Goldsmith. No more need be said."

Indeed not.

THE *Express* continues its dizzy plunge downmarket. A further 30 redundancies are rumoured, while more £12,000 a-year trainees are employed to do full-time reporting jobs. "There can be little doubt that the fight to keep young people from this menace is going badly," thundered the paper in a recent editorial.

This referred not to the *Express*'s own shameless exploitation of inexperienced youngsters but to a witless "investigation" into drugs which "revealed", shock horror, that drugs can be bought openly at London's King's Cross. To illustrate this "story", the *Express* printed a picture of their "reporter" dressed as a schoolgirl.

In fact this 21-year-old was yet another underpaid trainee who had been nervous about doing the story but was promised that her face would not be identified. She was shown a photograph with her face blurred, and went home reassured — only to wake on Monday morning in considerable distress to find her face plastered clearly all over the front page.

Doubtless the *Express*' socialist boss Lord Hollick thoroughly approves of such ruthless youth abuse.

ANDREW "Brillo Pad" Neill has got straight down to business as editor-in-chief of the *Scotsman*.

He took an instant shine to a young reporter from the Aberdeen *Press and Journal* who had come to interview him — chief hackette Tanya Thompson, who is envied by her colleagues for pouting good looks and endless legs — and so invited her for dinner at the swanky Balmoral Hotel.

The next day the old rogue whisked her off to Murrayfield for a rugby international and next he took her to a press ball in Glasgow. Almost swept off her feet by the Neill charm offensive, Tanya retreated to Aberdeen where she received a furious dressing-down from her editor who wanted to know why she had been consorting with the enemy.

BRENDAN "Chucky" Parsons, legendary *Mirror* deputy editor, was at the press awards last week when he waltzed up to the table where *Sun* deputy editor Neil Wallis was sitting with a group including Melinda Messenger, the latest Page Three sensation from, er, Swindon.

"Hello Neil, you old ram," leered the urbane Chucky. "Bet you'll be taking her home for a good porking."

Wallis, blanching, pointed to the woman on his other side and replied: "Oh Brendan, I don't believe you've met Mrs Wallis." Another Chucky exclusive!

CONGRATULATIONS to Paul Spike, the third editor of *Punch* in six months: within days of his arrival, the circulation had risen by 15,000.

Alas, the feat is less impressive than it sounds. Desperate to shift copies of his unwanted mag, Mohamed Fayed has hit on the brilliant idea of giving them away free to guests at Stakis and Queen's Moat hotels, and to long-haul passengers on Cathay Pacific.

Even so this still leaves many thousands of surplus copies to be disposed of. Any attempt to bury them, like German nuclear waste, would probably be scuppered by Greenpeace protesters. A more popular alternative is to fly them out to the Far East, aboard a chartered Cathay Pacific jet, and offer them to the Chinese government as a "goodwill gesture" during the handover of Hong Kong.

GLOBE-trotting gourmand Michael Winner clearly enjoyed his luxury freebie in Burma. "Let me be absolutely clear, the Road to Mandalay is one of the great excursions of the world," he gushed in the *Sunday Times* on 2 March. "Burma is hardly touristed at all, the people are beautiful, the atmosphere serene..."

If Winner bothered to read his own newspaper, he would have noticed a long and shocking report in the *Sunday Times* on 16 February, revealing that in the past four months thousands of Burmese civilians have been "killed, tortured or enslaved in forced-labour camps", and their villages systematically burnt down, in order to create "safe" areas for oil and tourism ventures. All most serene...

HALLO! THE HEARTWARMING COLUMN

HALLO! *MY sweet-natured chum Sir Ted Heath has found yet another way to annoy Lady Thatcher.*

Ted, who has been struggling to write his memoirs for more than 20 years (he has already handed back a £50,000 advance to Weidenfeld after failing to deliver any sort of manuscript), is now apparently in negotiations with HarperCollins (prop: Rupert Murdoch). Doubtless Murdoch wants to know why Ted's friend, the late Chinese dictator Deng Xiaopeng, was such a great man — and why Thatch was such an dreadful woman.

Best of all for Ted is the fact that HarperCollins published Lady Thatcher's memoirs — something that will infuriate Maggie, who will be oblivious to the irony that the odds on Ted delivering any memoirs at all grow longer by the day.

HALLO! **CHARMING Lord Lloyd-Webber, he of the newly hyphenated name, delighted racegoers at this year's Cheltenham Gold Cup festival with his sense of humour.**

One racing buddy reports that he shared a ride in a sumptuous glass lift with the masterly composer and millionaire at the racecourse. The lift was taking passengers on their way to the newly opened Panoramic Restaurant. Lloyd-Webber was entertaining chums at the eaterie — a snip at £350 a go.

During the lift's ascent to the restaurant, where his table loaded with gourmet delicacies awaited, the composer cast an imperious glance over the thousands of fellow racing fans below eating their burgers and chips from their cartons. He turned to his fellow passengers and said: "Look at them all down there eating their little bits of cardboard."

Lord Lloyd-Webber — the people's composer!

HALLO! *WHAT on earth is happening at the home of Lady Thatcher's former private secretary, the exceedingly snobbish Sir Charles Powell (Pole, please) and his fire-cracker Italian wife, Carla?*

Ravishing, pouting Carla, who is supposed to be so keen on Sir Jammy's Referendum party, has been making eyes at "new" Labour, dining Tony Blair, and allowing Peter "Mandy" Mandelson to sleep on a camp bed at the Powell's Belgravia home.

Sir Charles is of course no pinko and made a great play recently of attending Michael Howard's lecture, "Evening the Scales of Justice", at the Royal Institute. Sir Charles, I'm told, backs our humane home secretary as the next Tory leader and was more than a little embarrassed by his wife being caught talking about Howard to dear Mohamed Fayed on one of the charming Egyptian's secret videos. Oh dear. I hope "new" Carla does not go too far!

HALLO! TERRY MAJOR BALL, the prime minister's delightfully Pooteresque older brother, is this week being bundled off hastily to the United States — just as the general election approaches.

Curiously, this is exactly the fate that befell Mark Thatcher more than a decade ago: as the 1983 election loomed, the embarrassing youth was ruthlessly exiled to Dallas (never, thank goodness, to return). Ominously, last week the PM's brother told the *Express*: "I have to be careful what I say in public."

The identity of Major Ball's benefactors is being kept a state secret. However, I can reveal Terry's itinerary: Salt Lake City, the Grand Canyon, Las Vegas...

HALLO! *THIS is not the first time Tory rightwinger David Evans has shot his mouth off at a local school, I understand — the novelty this time was that a tape recorder running.*

On another visit to a classroom, when Evans was blustering about the need for mandatory capital punishment for murderers, a pupil asked if he thought Private Lee Clegg should have been hanged.

"Nah, that was different... 'e wasn't really guilty," replied the brilliant Evans. "He was doing his duty, shootin' terrorists."

'The Marquesa'

BUSINESS SECTION

JOHN SHARP is a freeman of the City of London, a leading figure in Midlands ecclesiastical circles and a fellow of the Institute of British Foundrymen (IBF). He is also international director of Triplex Lloyd, the company which mounted a sleazy and ultimately unsuccessful campaign to take over William Cook plc (see recent *Eyes passim*).

Members of the IBF's council are now asking Sharp to explain why he recently requested its copyright video recording of an IBF conference where Andrew Cook, the chairman of William Cook plc, addressed the members. Oddly enough, a transcript of Cook's rather colourful speech, together with stills from the video, turned up shortly afterwards on the front of the *Mail on Sunday*'s business section, where it was presented as proof that Triplex's hostile takeover bid deserved the support of all right-thinking people.

No doubt this was pure coincidence, and had nothing to do with John Sharp using his position at the IBF to assist his bosses at Triplex Lloyd. In that case, however, why *did* he want the video so urgently? Perhaps he found himself at a loose end one evening and realised that there was nothing worth watching on the telly.

THE investigation into the flotation of Mirror Group Newspapers in 1991 has been the most expensive inquiry ever carried out by department of trade and industry inspectors.

Recent figures disclosed in parliament show that it cost £8.2m — far more than even Guinness (£3m), Atlantic Computers (£6.6m) or Barlow Clowes (£6.4m).

The expensive report, written by John Thomas QC (who is now a judge) and R. Turner FCA, has been with the DTI for many moons now. Last year trade department press officers said it couldn't be published because of the trial of the Maxwell brothers. Now the trial is over, but there is no explanation for the report's continuing suppression.

I - I - I

THE Kim Il Sung Memorial Award for Promotion of Self has been awarded to the respected financial helmswoman Nicola Horlick.

Her review of *City Lives* by Cathy Courtney and Paul Thompson (*Sunday Times*, 16 Feb) contained a mere 26 references to herself, along with three whole mentions of the book in question.

Of the five quotations from the book itself, the final one mentions Horlick: "She has the utmost respect of her team," it says.

TORY BOYS

TORIES in the safe seat of Boston with Holland have outdone themselves with their choice of prospective parliamentary candidate (PPC): John Hayes, a former Federation of Conservative Students oik best remembered at Nottingham university for his tracts supporting apartheid and his McCarthyite attacks on university staff.

Tory matrons in Lincolnshire might not appreciate Hayes's theme song, however, bawled out to the tune of *John Brown's Body* by his rowdy FCS pals:

John Hayes' willy was a bloody awful sight
All messed up with gonorrhoea and caked about with shite
The agonies of syphilis kept him awake all night
But he still went buggering on, etc...

Meanwhile the party has selected another FCS yob to stand in the Labour heartland of Jarrow: Mark Allatt, permanent secretary of the Thatcherite Conservative Way Forward group.

It's a far cry from the days when Mark and his pals Martin "Trainspotter" Potter (the PPC in Chesterfield) Adrian Podge Lee (Tyne Bridge) Mark McGregor (West Ham) and Marc Gordon (Referendum Party Campaigns Manager) spent their day frightening the wits out of meetings of Tory "wets".

Allatt also belonged to the International Freedom Foundation, a now highly discredited international front for the apartheid movement. He later moved to Aldershot where he spent several years stirring up trouble in Julian Critchley's constituency.

The minuscule Tory group in Jarrow knew nothing of this proud record. It was more impressed by Allatt's smooth talk, his flash TVR sports car and voluble girlfriend, Sarah Farquarson, who runs Sir George Gardiner's office in the Commons. What the Jarrow Tories thought about wideboy Allatt's desertion of his loyal wife Jane, once he had met the delightful Sarah, is less clear.

FOLLOWING Alastair Campbell's tetchy blast at the *Guardian* in an interview in its own tabloid section, both he and Tony Blair went on a lunchtime charm offensive at the paper's grim headquarters in Farringdon Road.

Assembled hacks were delighted to be informed by Blair that he did not mind them "criticising Labour over aspects of its law and order policy", but were gobsmacked when he went on to slate their coverage of Labour's economic and welfare policies as "unhelpful".

Meanwhile the Blair camp suffered another blow with the sad announcement of the departure to the United States of columnist and features supremo Martin Kettle, a close confidant and "new" Labour good news man.

WHEN Peter Lilley came up with his big pensions idea, *Torygraph* editor Charles Moore was delighted to receive an eloquently written piece by maverick Labour MP Frank Field, supporting many of Lilley's ideas.

But the excitement was not to last. No sooner had the Field article arrived by fax than *Torygraph* executives received a call from the Labour leader's office, demanding that it be returned for "adjustments". An equally gloomy Field confirmed that his piece was being rewritten, and a toned down, turgid version subsequently appeared — although few can remember what he said.

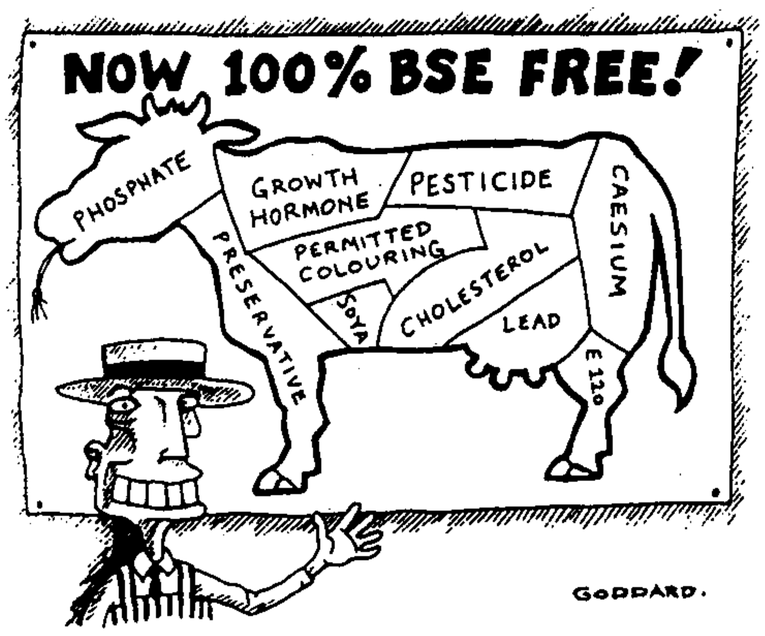
DEFENCE secretary Michael Portillo's recent visit to Hong Kong set a record for the number of media opportunities a politician can generate in a one-day visit.

Portillo, who flew in in the morning and left the same evening, kindly posed for innumerable photos, and his encounter with the Black Watch looked more like a political campaign rally than a meet-the-troops exercise.

Oddly enough, the British press party accompanying Portillo did not include a single defence correspondent, even though he was travelling in his official capacity. But there were plenty of political hacks and profile-writers, plus a man who is alleged to be writing his biography.

In a fit of generosity, Portillo had considered giving a speech to the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong — but cancelled (giving "lack of time" as a reason) when he discovered that lunchtime meetings of the Chamber of Commerce take place behind closed doors, and are therefore not open to the press.

Puzzled Hong Kongers wondered why he was so determined to raise his profile. Can it be, they asked, that a Tory leadership election is in the offing? Of course not. Being a staunch patriot, Michael was simply "flying the flag".



WHILE the Blair revolution has succeeded in snuffing out much of "old" Labour south of the border, the Scottish comrades are made of sterner stuff.

Having shown that they were not much impressed with the "dear leader's" volte face over devolution last summer, the Scottish Labour party has stubbornly persisted in electing lefties of the old variety to run the party's powerful executive. But a response has not been long in coming, with the surfacing of a shadowy group of youthful wannabes describing themselves as "The Network", intent on removing any visible trace of dissent from the Scottish Labour executive.

The first casualty was the party's affable assistant general-secretary Tommy Shepherd, who "resigned" in January. "The Network" also took advantage of a feeble turnout of party members at the recent Scottish Labour party conference (or leader's rally as it has become known) in Inverness, and heavyweight home ruler veteran Bob McLean, along with colleague Rosina Macrae, were deposed by "The Network's" garrulous college leavers anxious to be seen to be doing the leader's bidding.

WHEN Sir Jammy Fishpaste's Referendum party representative in Pontypridd wrote to one of his supporters he managed to irritate him on two counts.

Not only did prospective parliamentary candidate Aaron Wood's letter arrive in an envelope with the cheapest stamp possible — requiring the helper to pay a 31p surcharge — but it also contained an invitation.

It asked the helper to an informal meeting at Legends Hotel in Pontyclun. Slipped in with the letter and campaign bumph was an advertisement for the hotel: "March Madness — 2 Carvery meals for the price of 1 - Book now to avoid disappointment".

The supporter found the advert in with the candidate's material most odd — until he noticed the proprietor of Legends Hotel was, er, Aaron Wood.

FROM animal protection to sustainable growth, the Lib Dems' website shows the party has policies on everything — including one on, er, "Armadillo Carrot".

Voters keen to discover the Ashdown angle on this important topic are referred to the relevant policy page where they are told: "Armadillo Carrot. There are a few words not present in any other document. Paragraph."

This is the sort of election-winner one expects from an outfit that gets John Cleese to do its party political broadcasts for it.

MORE on Tim Walker, the Haul Waste marketing manager seconded to the department of the environment in Northern Ireland to help draw up its waste management strategy.

Walker's presence at the DoE — and at the public inquiry into Haul Waste's plan to build a 160-acre rubbish dump at Magheramorne — have caused much public concern, though the DoE denied his two positions represented a conflict of interest.

Hmm. When Radio 4's *Costing the Earth* wanted to report the landfill row, Walker tried to persuade the producer not to. He told the programme-makers the row would not make a good story and that radio coverage could affect the outcome of the inquiry. In fact Radio 4 will go ahead with the programme in a few weeks' time and it won't affect the inquiry — because a decision has already been taken, although it will not be announced until after the general election.

The Island Magee and District Conservation Society says it has heard from an inside source that the inquiry commissioner found in the campaigners' favour against the proposed dump — but that his decision has been overruled by the DoE. Residents fear toxic leachate from the dump will pollute nearby Larne Lough, a site of special scientific interest, and say they will take their case to Europe if the DoE really has decided to approve the dump.

LOBBYING MAJOR

CORRESPONDENCE sent to the Eye concerning Decision Makers, the award-winning lobbying firm famous for persuading the government to site the intermediate Channel tunnel link station at Blue Circle's former cement works at Ebbsfleet, makes interesting reading.

The then deputy Tory party chair Angela Rumbold resigned in embarrassment over her possible influence as an employee of Decision Makers; and at the time the *Eye* asked whether Decision Makers' apparent influence had anything to do with events it sponsored in John Major's Huntingdon constituency — in particular the local Tories' annual ball.

Decision Makers chair Maureen Tomison wrote to the *Eye* stating: "We do go to a very large number of social events around the country as part of our job. One such event was a dinner dance in Huntingdon in the autumn 1993... We do not sponsor or organise an annual autumn event in Huntingdon."

It appears Ms Tomison's answer may have been making use of the lobbyists' art of the slippery reply. An *Eye* mole has a letter from Tomison to Peter Brown, at the Huntingdon Conservative Association at the time, which reads: "Kevin Drew was quite right in stating that we are staunch supporters of the Prime Minister. We would be delighted to assist him in every way possible. Of course we will be one of the principal sponsors for your annual ball... You may like to know that our accountant tells me that we have in one way or another donated just over £15,000 to the party in the last year and will continue to do so because we have great faith in John Major." How strange!

The staunch Major supporter and sponsor then went on to confirm the dependence at the time on Rumbold's support: "We are beginning to channel information through Dame Angela Rumbold for his [Major] use." How convenient.

'Backbiter'

NOOKS and CORNERS

IN THE beginning, the millennium commission was intended to help projects all over the United Kingdom. Never mind that nobody seems to know why we are celebrating a change in date, or even when (2000 or 2001?), or that hardly anyone else in Europe is indulging in such hysteria over a chronological change that only has Christian significance or is pointless: Virginia Bottomley, chairman of the commission — "dead from the neck upwards" as she may well be — was nevertheless proud to be able to help "the people of the UK to realise their aspirations for the new millennium".

But now something seems quietly to have changed. Here are some millennium projects which all have something in common.

Belfast — unlike those other cities around the Irish Sea: Dublin, Liverpool and Glasgow — lacks a good civic art gallery, so it was proposed to build one. In Glasgow, City of Architecture and Design in 1999, it was hoped to mark the millennium by creating several dozen new civic spaces all over the city while the National Trust for Scotland proposed several projects: on the island of Canna, at Culzean, planting more of the Millennium Forest as well as something called the "Thousand Threads" to extend all over Scotland.

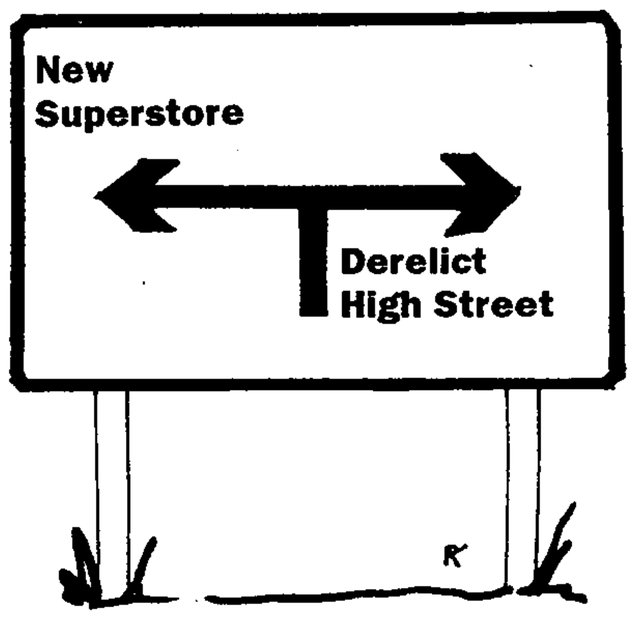
But, solid and reputable as the NTS may be, all these projects have been turned down in the latest round of applications by the millennium commission — along with the Belfast and Glasgow schemes and much else all over Britain. And why? Because the ideas were no good? No, not at all: simply because — as the civil servants now discreetly whisper into aggrieved ears — all the money is needed at Greenwich to construct the Millennium Dome for the Millennium Exhibition.

Nobody of course seems to know what will be in that exhibition, or why, or why we need this old-fashioned temporary plastic atmosphere-polluting structure big enough to contain 13 Albert Halls. But "the dome meets all our requirements for the exhibition," Jenny Page, the chief executive of the commission, assures us. "Monumental yet flexible, a stunning addition to the London skyline and, not least weatherproof to ensure that we can enjoy a year long exhibition whatever the British climate throws at us."

We? Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the rest of England will obviously be thrilled that hundreds of millions of pounds of millennium lottery money is to be siphoned off to buttress a time honoured British tradition: Jobs for the Boys — in London, that is. Clearly the millennium is well worth celebrating if it keeps the Richard Rogers Partnership in full employment.

The Great Exhibition of 1851 was rescued at the last minute by the advent of Joseph Paxton with his sketch for the Crystal Palace on a piece of blotting paper. Can we now hope and pray for a new Paxton to come up with a concept for the year 2000 which is genuinely innovative, interesting and with a purpose? I doubt it: Lord Rogers of Riverside would soon see him (or her) off; and the last thing our smug "new" Labour British establishment wants is competition, after all.

THE Three Magpies public house in Hall Green, Birmingham, was built in 1935 and designed by the Birmingham architect Edwin F. Reynolds. It is rather a good building in its thirties way: asymmetrical, stylish and unusual. The pub is one of comparatively few in Britain to be designed in a Modern or "Moderne" style and, today, it is the only such pub to retain its original interior. In a survey carried out by English Heritage and the Campaign for Real Ale, the Three Magpies was identified as a building of national importance. A candidate for listing, you might think? Yes indeed: English Heritage, supported by the Twentieth Century Society, proposed just that. But the listing branch of the department of national heritage (DNH) said no.



So strongly, for once, did English Heritage feel about this that it asked for a reassessment. All in vain. So now there is nothing to stop the pub's owners — Mill House Inns Ltd — gutting the interior. And without the statutory protection of listed building status, there is little that can be done to stop this — although Birmingham city council, to its credit, is trying to prevent the exterior being mauled and to salvage something of the interior.

Perhaps Virginia Bottomley might like to tell us why her inspectors at the DNH felt so very confident in ignoring the advice of English Heritage and thus inadvertently obliging Messrs Mill House Inns?

'Piloti'

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

THE European commission is investigating the legality of the £151m Cardiff Bay barrage scheme which will banish birds from their feeding grounds (*Eye* 918). If Brussels rules against the Cardiff Bay development corporation, the government can expect a hefty fine.

The barrage, more than half completed, is a cornerstone of the quango's £2.4bn scheme to revive Cardiff's docklands. But it needs private investment, slow in coming now and likely to brake even harder if the EC gives the barrage back to the birds.

There is a precedent to excite environmentalists and quango-haters. Last year the European court ruled against the destruction of similar feeding grounds in the Medway estuary.

Pseuds Corner

" 'What is the use of running away? I am sure to catch you. Little fool, look at me!' Darzee's wife knew better than to do *that*, for a bird who looks at a snake's eyes gets so frightened that she cannot move."

The parts of Darzee, the tailor-bird's wife, and of Nagina, the snake, were played out before us at Old Trafford, with the difference that Coventry City did look into the eyes of the cobra, and the laws of *The Jungle Book* are ineluctable.

You could almost hear Cantona saying: "Little fool, look at me," as, after 3min 40sec of the match, he pushed a through-ball in for Cole. And Breen looked, for he knew no better, and he and his team paid the price.

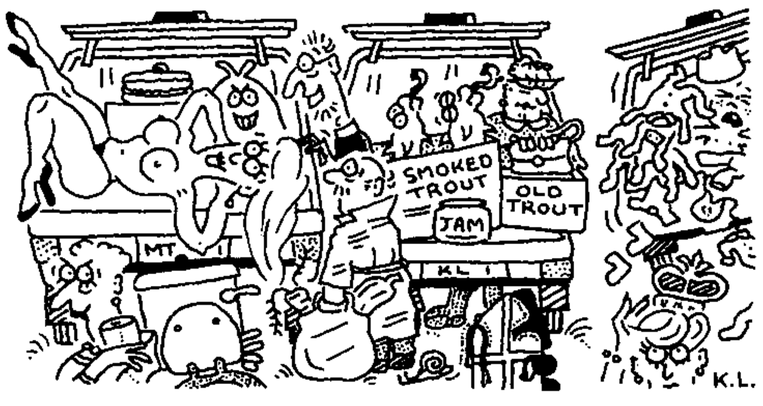
SIMON BARNES
The Times

"On television these days I go more and more for anything real, dodgy concept though that is. I could spend hours placidly watching somebody digging a hole in the road."

PROF. TERRY EAGLETON
The Guardian

Forty gay men are invited to spend an intensive week together in the wilds of Scotland, living in a surreal rambling mansion set in an area of outstanding natural beauty in private grounds with its own sauna, pool, loch and farm gardens, in extensive woods untouched by man. The plentiful food is organic vegetarian fare from our farm, with snacks and drinks available day and night.

Advertisement in "The Pink Paper"



Having examined patterns of purchasing within the car-boot sale, we consider how car-boot-sale goers themselves construct and participate within the space of the boot sale. At one level, this construction is shown to involve the use both of accumulated and of local knowledge and to be open to interpretation as illustrative of competitive individualism. Another reading of the car-boot sale, however, and one central to understanding the enduring popularity of this phenomenon, is its transgressive nature. The space of the car-boot sale is argued to be one where people come to play, where the conventions of retailing are suspended, and where participants come to engage in and produce theatre, performance, spectacle, and laughter. We go on to examine the connections between the car-boot sale and the Bakhtinian notion of carnival, arguing that the car-boot sale needs to be read in multifarious ways: as a liminal space which encapsulates the carnivalesque, the festive, and the popular, which subverts convention and yet which, through its celebration of the free market and the unshackled individual, embraces facets of the dominant order.

Environment and Planning D: Society and Space

History consists of an organisation of language which allows what can be said at any period. Born into nature, I have to win my identity in a culture which belongs to others. From them I borrow an idealised image which becomes the only "me" I'll ever have.

Since we lose being by entering meaning, desire is endless and never satisfied. There is sexual intercourse but there is no sexual relation because no one is ever *really there* to love anyone. Lacan says we can hope for nothing — all subjectivity is impossible — but every line of his writing shakes with vitality. Getting older I've found his pessimism increasingly attractive, though my copy of the Ecrits still smells of Ambre Solaire.

PROFESSOR ANTONY EASTHOPE
The Guardian

CONTRIBUTORS: David Bradshaw, J. Taylor, R. Whitehead, Peter Hughes, J. Taylor, Bill Robb.

£10 paid for entries

TV

Crime Traveller (BBC1)

Space: Above & Beyond (BBC2)

The Outer Limits (BBC2)

THE BBC loves its science fiction. Or at least BBC1 controller Michael Jackson does.

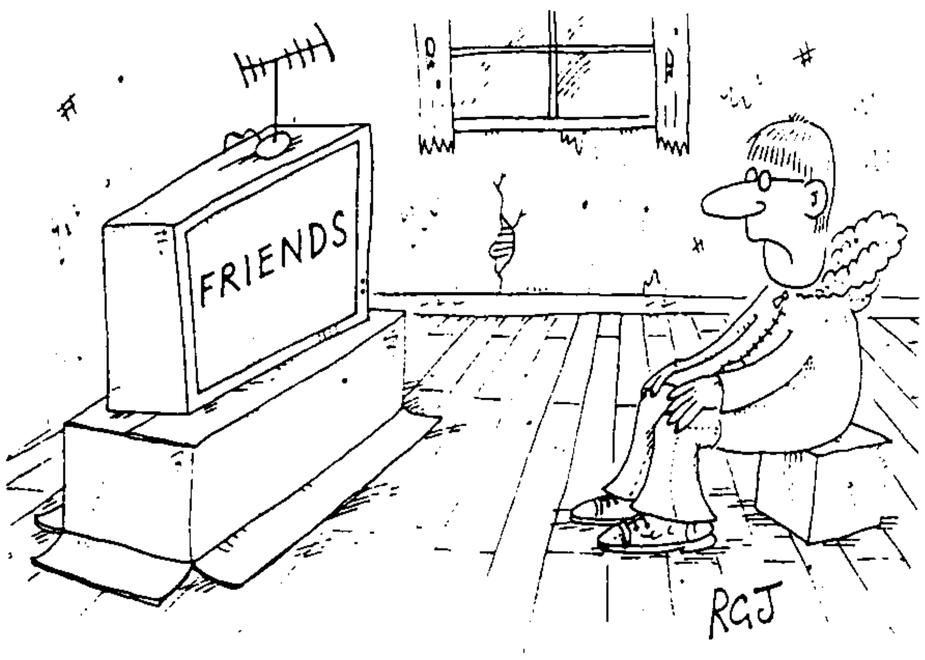
When he was running BBC2 he fairly larded the schedules with the stuff. *Star Trek* in its every incarnation; Gerry Anderson's complete back catalogue; *X Files*, *Y Files*, *Three Bags Full Files* — if there were bug-eyed monsters to be had at knockdown prices, Jackson would show them at 6pm on weekday evenings. He even repeated *Buck Rogers In The 25th Century*, a 1970s cult series so utterly hopeless it turned out not to have a cult following at all.

But while it's easy to buy in tatty old SF series from the US, it's rather harder to make your own. Homegrown science fiction can't hope to emulate the lavish production values of the American shows, which cost anything up to $1.25m an episode. And generations of British viewers know exactly what happens when you get it wrong: *Blake's Seven*. No controller who wishes to stay employed will ever want to make that kind of mistake again.

Crime Traveller must have seemed the perfect compromise. It is unquestionably science fiction, in that Michael French and Chloe Annett make weekly use of a time machine to flip back through time to solve crimes before they happen. It is also a cop show, set in the present day. It requires no expensive effects, daft costumes or aliens from the planet Spod. It can use the standard cop show locations, costumes, car chases, clichés. This makes it very cheap. Controllers like cheap.

But when you make programmes primarily because they are cheap, it often turns out that there was no other good reason for making them at all. Created as a compromise, *Crime Traveller* is afflicted by uncertainty at every level. The actors can't decide whether to take it seriously or not, so some do and some don't. The dialogue veers between the arch and the mundane. The plots are necessarily intricate and complex, so the direction is big, colourful, cartoony. The series has a permanently raised eyebrow.

What this represents, more than anything, is a failure of nerve. By treating it as a bit of a joke, everyone involved thinks they might get away with it. Camp it up and you won't get the blame. It's the same timidity that made *Blake's Seven* so unwatchable, and more recently has undermined the BBC's other SF-slanted series, *Bugs*. We may chuckle at *Star Trek* for taking itself too seriously, but it has been with us, in one form or other, for 30 years. The best American shows know that if you don't take yourself seriously, no one else will.



That said, some of the worst American shows can currently be seen on BBC2, where barrels are being scraped. **Space: Above And Beyond** is the brainchild of two *X-Files* writers, but you'd never know it. Subtle, enigmatic and allusive it isn't, but *Top Gun In Space* it most assuredly is. Five attractive young American marines (three boys, two girls) fight the evil Chigs, who have pointy red ships and melt into green slime when exposed to oxygen.

Each week the battalion goes out on a mission, and each week everyone bar our five heroes is killed, because all the others have been hired just for the one episode, while our five heroes are contracted for the full series. Everyone has firm jaws; no one smiles. As in *The X-Files*, a lot of the overhead lights don't work. In the US the show was cancelled after just one season.

The Outer Limits survives, although how it does is a far greater mystery than any seen in the programme. This week a deaf woman was given an implant that made her hear for the first time, so what did she hear? Aliens whose planet was hurtling towards the earth, of course. Did anyone believe her? Of course not: in droves they all turned over and watched Channel 4 instead.

Whether it's American or British, the fundamental problem is that there is too much of this stuff and a lot of it isn't any good. Jackson's enthusiasm for SF, estimable in itself, has resulted in overkill. *Crime Traveller* started promisingly but ratings overall are well down. Even *The X-Files*, previously triumphant on BBC1, has a shopworn quality to it. The truth is still out there — but increasingly no one much cares.

'Old Couch Potato'

MEDIA NEWS

EXPERT observers of Albania now agree a messy civil war is inevitable — not least between the 11 BBC "news correspondents" in the country who are jostling for supremacy.

After several days of internecine strife, a harassed duty editor on the foreign desk at TV Centre was so annoyed by the "childish and unprofessional" conduct of BBC hacks she sent an urgent memo to her superiors:

"I found the behaviour of a number of the Albania troops quite extraordinary this weekend; on Saturday I clocked approx. 42 calls from Hugh [Schofield] and [Kevin] Connolly and a lesser amount from Peter Morgan… All the calls had the same object: I WANT TO BE ON TV!!! There seemed no understanding that the Foreign Duty Editor does indeed lobby for the chaps in the field and the programme editor makes a final decision on what to take. And that the end product should simply be a good news programme.

"There was unacceptable slagging off of other correspondents as well; and they all managed (in addition to being on the phone to London constantly) to speak to one another internally — a phone call questioning the judgment of footage of their 'rival' would then follow…

"On Sunday Kevin Bishop rang in to announce that he was recovered from his illness and Simon Wilson would not be needed — 10 minutes earlier Simon had boarded a plane from Frankfurt. Though delighted that Kevin was feeling and sounding bouncy and cheerful enough to feel territorial again, one reflected on the changes that can apparently happen so rapidly in Albania.

"Meanwhile I had a conversation with Hugh pointing out that I would indeed do my best to represent the interests of our boys in all far-flung corners of the earth and that I did not need 42 phone calls to be appraised of the situation. Nevertheless, there was a brief flurry of calls (less than a dozen) before the teatime bulletin…

"Full-scale civil war then broke out over the main bulletin with Bishop, Morgan and Connolly all putting forward varying viewpoints… Suffice to say that another 17 phone calls came in from all parties.

"You can draw your own conclusions from the above."

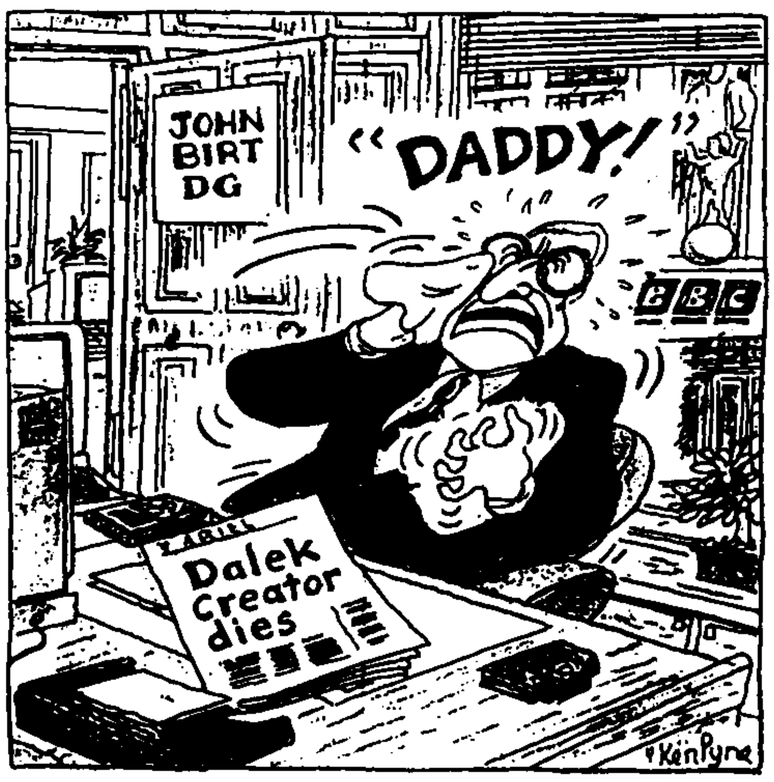
FILTH IN THE FENS

THE dismissal of Martin Lord, shaven-headed director of the pisspoor *Vanessa* chat-show, is still causing great anxiety to Lord Hollick's gauleiters at Anglia TV (see last *Eye*).

Rumours galore have spread about the reason for Lord's hasty eviction. One of the more colourful stories — alas untrue — had it that Lord was directing *Vanessa* when something needed to be moved on the studio floor. Lord, according to this apocryphal yarn, said "Go and stand it next to the fat ****", without realising that the talkback switch was down and his words could therefore be heard by the whole studio — including the fat **** herself.

The awful truth, which Anglia bosses are so desperate to hide, is no less embarrassing. While assembling the title sequence for a projected programme, Lord had compiled an inventory of shots of people getting up in the morning. To complete the sequence, he hid a miniature camera behind the pedestal in one of the men's lavatories, the aim being to film a bare bum being lowered on to the seat. (Wags pointed out that if he wanted pictures of arseholes he need only borrow the passports of Anglia's management.)

The concealment of the camera was inadequate. It was discovered by a malicious spoilsport who ratted to the management. Puritanical Peter Meier, the personnel manager, had Lord marched out of the building forthwith. The unfortunate Lord has now turned up in Plymouth, working for West Country Television — whose all-too-appropriate acronym is WC TV.



I-BSkyB

Baffled by something you've seen on telly? Ask our Shoba Vazirami — she has all the answers...

Q: What is the name of the theme tune to Sky TV's The X Files?

E. Tile, Canterbury

Shoba Says: It is called X Files and is on a CD single by Mark Snow.

Q: I missed the film Nostradamus when it was on Sky last year. Will it ever be repeated?

J. Hughes, Whetstone, N. London

Shoba Says: You're in luck — it's on early on Wednesday (February 19) on the Movie Channel at 1.35am.

The Sun

MEDIA (Cont.)

TABLOID favourite Samantha Janus caused a stir when she appeared on a live Welsh-language TV programme.

She was in Cardiff filming a drama called *Up and Under* and was interviewed on the talk show *i dot* which goes out at 9pm. She was asked if she'd learnt any Welsh. Oh yes, she boasted, I know how to say "How are you". She then said "cont bach budr" which is, apparently, more accurately translated as "dirty little c***".

Embarrassed S4C executives, already nervous about a new Labour government's attitude to the channel's £72m public subsidy, are trying to find out which helpful translator Janus had been using.

Swearing and S4C go hand in hand, of course. Only last year a top children's presenter, Gwenllian Jones, was demoted after she told a kiddy that *Superted* would be "pissed off" in front of a teatime audience.

VIEWERS worried about the amount of metaphorical crap on TV should be thankful they don't work at the BBC, where piles of the real thing are being mysteriously deposited around TV Centre.

The provenance of the turds is unknown, but the perpetrator doesn't just drop them any-old-where: the last was dumped most thoughtfully — in the studio used by Esther Rantzen.

JOHN BIRT and Tony "Head Prefect" Hall are visiting Hong Kong for the handover to China. Not wishing to have to mix with the 182 BBC staff — yes, 182 — who are flying out from London for the festivities, they have wisely equipped themselves with first-class air tickets (unlike their wretched hacks, who are obliged to travel Economy).

What possible justification can the director-general and his head of news have for attending the End of Empire ceremonies?

"Head Prefect" seems strangely touchy on the subject. He has warned staff at the BBC office n Hong Kong that if news of his trip reaches the media "you will have to answer to me".

THE schock resignation of George McKechnie, editor of Glasgow's *Herald* newspaper, was immediately covered by BBC local news, with *Reporting Scotland* putting it high on the news list as insiders speculated about the *Herald*'s owners, Caledonian Publishing, and the company's financial position.

Curiously, not a word about the Scottish paper appeared on the ITV channel Scottish Television's local news programme. Could this have had anything to do with Scottish Television's buy-out last October of a certain Caledonian Publishing?

"So she ate a bit of porridge and slept in your bed. Do you know how under-staffed we are, Mr Bear?"

HACKWATCH: THE DAILY HELLOGRAPH

CONGRATULATIONS to the *Daily Telegraph*, which was named "Newspaper of the Year" at the British Press Awards two weeks ago. Praising the *Telegraph* as "a thoroughly professional newspaper", the judges commented that "it has modernised its appearance without sacrificing its character".

Would Sir Herbert Gussett and other veteran *Telegraph*-readers agree? Here are a few samples of what they have had to endure in recent months:

2 January: The paper kicks off a super soaraway new year with a front-page photo of Prince Charles and Prince Harry on a ski-lift in Switzerland, accompanied by Tara and Santa Palmer-Tomkinson. Below the mast-head, a huge headline alerts us to another treat inside: Allison Pearson on cute animals.

3 January: Much of page three is devoted to a most important story from Robert Hardman in Klosters: Tara Palmer-Tomkinson has taken five new outfits on her skiing holiday. As befits a thoroughly professional newspaper, there are photos of all five, plus an analytical piece by one of the *Telegraph*'s multitude of fashion correspondents.

4 January: "Millions of television viewers in north-east England are being denied an insight into the love lives of Hollywood's rich and famous that will be broadcast to the rest of the country," the *Telegraph* reports indignantly. The news is accompanied by a photo of *Baywatch*'s Gena Lee Nolan in a fetching swimming costume, so that northern viewers know what they're missing.

6 January: "My heart rejoiced," writes W.F. Deedes, "to see Tara Palmer-Tomkinson and her sister riding alongside the Prince of Wales and Prince Harry in a ski-lift at Klosters last week. And it was good to hear from our royal correspondent, Robert Hardman, about all the skiing outfits she has been displaying..."

8 January: A full-page feature on violinist Vanessa-Mae looks at what she has achieved "during the 18 gorgeous, exciting years that have elapsed since her birth". The piece is tastefully headlined: "Music's Unexploded Sex Bomb".

10 January: For the benefit of readers who are thinking of visiting a gym to work off their Christmas flab, the *Telegraph* carries a big feature on correct etiquette: "For instance, although most gyms have water dispensers, you will not be welcome unless you take your own bottle. Vittel or Volvic are *the* chic labels to carry..."

14 January: The Peterborough column reveals exclusively that the favourite Spice Girl of Bernard Jenkin MP is Emma, the fat one.

15 January: With all due solemnity, the *Telegraph* reports that Michael Portillo, the defence secretary, wishes to despatch the Spice Girls to Bosnia to entertain Our Boys.

17 January: One of the paper's top political interviewers, gorgeous pouting Petronella Wyatt, is given a whole page to discuss the sex-life and eating habits of Ruby Wax.

23 January: Another full-page story on another burning issue of the moment: "At last the truth is out — step machines and keep-fit bikes can make your bottom bigger. Charles Laurence reports..." For the benefit of *Telegraph* readers who have forgotten what a bottom looks like, there is a huge photo of a slender young woman in a skin-tight Lycra suit sticking out her rump.

25 January: Frank Johnson reveals, with understandable pride, that he has received a letter from Tamara Beckwith — "a prominent 'It' girl".

27 January: "A failed marriage and royal rival left Julia Carling outwardly calm, inwardly in turmoil. She tells Elizabeth Grice her side of the story." Indeed she does, at enormous length.

3 February: A big news story: "Women's Fashion Takes a Fresh Look at the Bottom Line." With heroic restraint, the paper omits to show us any bottoms this time. Never mind: another "news" story on the same page, about the "lure of the catwalk", is embellished with a photo of gorgeous, pouting, 16-year-old Sarah Thomas, the latest supermodel.

8 February: A box across the top of the front page lists the treats in store: "Starting today: The A-Z of fashion... Win a designer outfit every day from Liberty... Weekend: Invest in the new pinstripes... Magazine: A new slant in necklines." Continuing the theme, a prominent front-page story announces that Princess Diana "delivered a stern rebuke yesterday to one of her favourite fashion designers by refusing to attend a charity party planned in her honour". Inside, Frank Johnson discusses the ever-fascinating subject of "female breasts", with particular reference to Melinda Messenger, the *Sun*'s new Page Three girl.

11 February: "As she celebrates 30 years in lingerie, Janet Reger talks to Cassandra Jardine..."

13 February: Political expert Tom Utley writes a news story analysing Cherie Blair's appearance. "Her new look, created, it was said, by the fashionable *coiffeur* Michaeljohn, won universal plaudits from the hair-conscious press when she displayed it publicly for the first time last month."

17 February: The *Telegraph* discovers a "radical solution" to the problem of Visible Pantie Lines: the G-string — or, as it is known these days, the thong. "These new knickers do look best on a perfect bottom," the paper warns, so anyone with an imperfect rear "would probably do better to stick to this season's other underwear craze — the big knicker. But for those who *do* have beautiful behinds, a Gucci thong... really is a must." Inevitably, there is a picture of a beautiful female behind, bisected by a tiny thong.

20 February: The distinguished commentator Alexander Chancellor laments the decline of an old *Telegraph* favourite: "The photograph of Elizabeth Hurley that appeared in practically every British newspaper on Tuesday was enough to bring tears to the eyes. The glamour-puss didn't merely look ludicrous in her clumsy, see-through lace outfit with bikini top and big black knickers. She looked ugly. This is a horrible thing to say, but it's true... What can be the matter?"

24 February: "After a four-year break, Lisa Stansfield is back with a new album." Which makes her a natural candidate for a full-page interview in the *Daily Telegraph*, whose readers must have been waiting impatiently for news of this not-very-famous pop singer.

25 February: Jubilation at Canary Wharf as the Spice Girls win two — yes two! — Brit awards. This splendid news occupies much of page three, along with a big photo of Geri busting out of her Union Jack micro-dress.

28 February: *Telegraph* readers will be thrilled to learn that Patsy Kensit has appeared at a London fashion show — wearing "six-inch spike heels" — only days after "attending a clinic apparently suffering from exhaustion because of media attention". To ensure that there is no slackening of attention, one of the paper's home news pages treats us to a large photo of la Kensit in her heels.

6 March: The Spice Girls are to appear in the next edition of *Debrett's People of Today*. The *Telegraph* carries a feature on the op-ed page analysing the significance of this momentous event.

10 March: It had to happen sooner or later: W.F. Deedes writes about the Spice Girls. "In what may turn out to be a noisy but colourless election," he observes, "the demand for exciting characters such as the Spice Girls is bound to exceed demand." Eh? Whatever he means, Lord Deedes needn't worry: *Telegraph* readers' appetite for Spice will be amply satisfied between now and polling day. Whether there will be any room for boring old politics is quite another matter.

9 March: A huge advert in the *Sunday Telegraph* alerts us to the delights in store tomorrow

DOING THE ROUNDS

IT'S GRIM up north — especially if you're mentally ill. North Yorkshire Health Authority has ordered an urgent risk assessment of the acute psychiatric unit at St Mary's hospital, part of Scarborough and North East Yorkshire Health Care Trust.

Local GPs are threatening to remove contracts and senior manager John Canning, who was brought in to shake up mental health services three years ago, has resigned. The unit itself has been forced to cancel a number of admissions because of a staffing crisis, and those who make it inside are faced with "an absolutely appalling building situated in a former workhouse."

Curiously, the trust has had problems securing private finance to help the unit out.

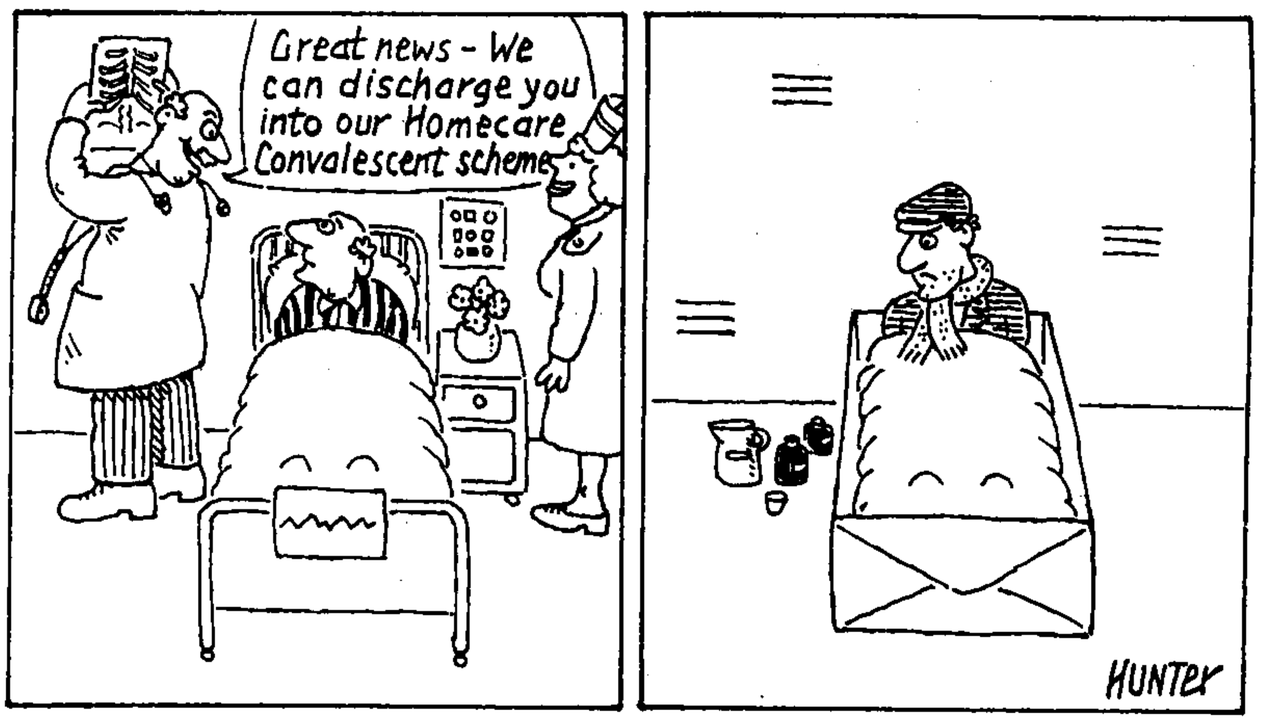
Meanwhile a month-long investigation into mental healthcare at **Bolton Hospitals Trust** has failed to say why 17 patients died in a six-week period. However, it has exposed an inappropriate mix of elderly patients with young substance abusers and those with more serious disorders. The ratio of trained to untrained staff was inadequate, especially at night; and some staff complained that disciplinary action wasn't fair or justifiable. Still, things have improved since last year when a nursing assistant was charged with the attempted murder of a patient.

● **LONDON's St Bartholomew's hospital** is one of 24 NHS trusts (and 10 health authorities) who invest in arms manufacturers. Barts has more than 2,000 shares in GEC, the world's 10th biggest arms company, but a spokesman remained unrepentant. "This has nothing to do with the management of the trust, but with the special trustees whose job it is to maximise investments."

● **CAITHNESS general** and **Dunbar hospital** in northern **Scotland** have been charging hotel rates for patients using pay phones. Calls made from the hospital last, penny for penny, only a quarter of the time of those from a BT phone box. This was not a deliberate attempt to fleece the public but "a technical fault in the calibration system" which has been sorted.

● **NORTH Middlesex, Whittington, Chase Farm** and **Moorfields Eye hospitals** have all ceased admitting all but emergencies due to lack of funds. The many patients affected include a woman who was waiting for treatment at **Moorfields** and has since gone blind. Her case was considered to non-urgent.

The North Middlesex's "we're bust: emergencies only" policy was leaked to the press by local GPs. As NM's director of operations Colin Boakes put it: "The NM is one of the last hospitals in North London to take these steps. It's not something we'd make a press release about."



Nearby **Hornsey Central** is in even more dire straits. The **Whittington Trust** (£2.4m under) has withdrawn X-ray and outpatient facilities and its closure is imminent. Meanwhile the closure of **Hackney's Queen Elizabeth hospital for Sick Children** has been brought forward four years in a bid by the bust **Royal Hospitals Trust** to save £4m. Expect most of **Barts** to close early, too.

● LAST year **Sheffield's Royal Hallamshire** hired a private company, Document Bureau, to transfer 50,000 files worth of written medical information, much of it strictly confidential, on to computer disc.

To cope with the enormity of the task, the company hired casual staff to do the work, most of whom had no training and none of whom was security checked. They were paid as little as 17p per file, but each had access to 3,000 files which give detailed obstetric and gynaecological information about patients at **Nether Edge hospital**, including their names and addresses. As one former employee put it: "It's disgraceful. Any pervert could go in there, read about the women and use the information." The company has since been fired, but local doctors are not impressed. Dr Trevor May said: "We have always been assured that files put into computers would be done by health service staff bound by the rules of confidentiality. Sheffield GPs will hit the roof over this."

● THE government has decided not to appeal against a tribunal ruling that home delivered continence pads should be VAT free (see Vat Off All Pads, *Eyes passim*). Perversely, VAT will still be charged on continence products delivered to trusts and nursing homes. Just why the government believes incontinence should be cheaper at home is unclear.

● WOULD you like to assess doctors? The **General Medical Council** is advertising for both medical and lay people to review doctors who are referred to the council because of alleged lapses in performance. You will work in panels of three (two doctors, one not) to establish whether the doctor's performance is "seriously deficient" and to decide what retraining or supervision is necessary. You must be scrupulous, honest, well-balanced, rational and able to see the broader picture. Interested? Phone David Sykes at the GMC on 0171-915 3667, quoting *Private Eye* as your reference.

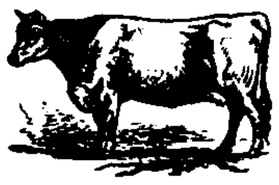
DEJA VU FOR THE DAY

THE inquest into the death of a woman at **Guy's hospital** whose heart bypass op had been cancelled four times because intensive care was full has heard that intensive care beds were regularly shut due to a lack of specialist nurses.

PS: **London's Thames Valley University** is increasing monthly rents for nursing students by 33 percent leaving some with £30 a week to live on.

M.D.

DOWN ON THE FARM



HOW interesting that, so close to an election, the Labour party should be taking such a close interest in "faecal contamination" on beef carcases and the "suppression" of the so-called "damning" Swann report on slaughterhouse standards.

The word is that ministers *did* quietly shelve the report volume — not least because it had been edited by a passed-over veterinary surgeon who had failed in his bid for promotion to operations director for the Meat Hygiene Service (MHS).

So rejected, the said vet left behind a poisoned pill — copy to the opposition agriculture spokesman — ready to be used to flay the egregious farm minister Douglas Hogg when electoral circumstances were favourable. Never mind that the beef industry is still reeling from the effects of BSE: anything goes when there is a political point to be made.

The truth about the Swann report is that it was based on a series of inspections carried out by MHS teams who had been carefully briefed to "mark down" hygiene standards, hence the alarming tales of "faecal contamination". The devious purpose of this was to show how poorly the local authorities, which the MHS replaced, had been enforcing standards. Then, in a couple of years' time when the exercise was repeated — and higher scores were awarded all round — the wonderful MHS could show what a sterling job it had been doing and what a clever idea it had been to launch the "service" in the first place.

The joke is that this devious plot, hatched by MHS officials, has so embarrassed John Major that the knives are out for the unhappy Johnston McNeill, the former Belfast dustbin supremo who runs the service. Fortunately for him, with only weeks until the election there is no time to fire him.

However, if the new administration is a shade pinkish, McNeill will not be long in place. Rumour has it that, having dropped his former masters quite literally in the shit, he will be back counting dustbins in Belfast while the "Most Hated Service" is quietly absorbed into a new food standards agency — which may well create even more havoc for its new masters as food-poisoning continues to spiral out of control.

SOMERSET organic farmer Mark Purdey's attempts to prove a link between organophosphorus (OP) pesticide Phosmet used on cattle and BSE (*Eyes passim*) continue — even though he is continually hampered by claims from the ministry of agriculture (aka Maffia) that in 1995 the theory was tested by the Medical Research Council (MRC) toxicology unit at Leicester and found wanting.

Those who take the MRC verdict at face value should know that the OP used in its tests had little in common with the "Phosmet" used on cattle, and could not replicate circumstances in the field.

Why the MRC chose to rely on an unrepresentative test has not been explained. It is of course a complete coincidence that until 1996 all rights to Phosmet were held by agrichemical giant Zeneca, formerly ICI, and that the Leicester MRC toxicology unit was funded in part by... Zeneca.

'New Muckspreader'

Old Macdonald

ALBERT

THE Rotten Borough Advertiser

Friday, 21st March 1997

STINK OF THE DUMP

PEOPLE in Clydach and Gelli in the Rhondda valley were intrigued to learn (in *Eye* 915) that the mixture of puralite, filter cake and *household* waste dumped in *neighbouring* Merthyr by waste firm Biffa caused poisonous fumes to seep into the sewers. They have been suffering exactly the same problem at the Nantygwydion tip owned by Rhondda-Cynon-Taff council.

When Biffa stopped dumping puralite at the Trecatti tip in Merthyr in 1995 it had to find another bunch of suckers to take it: so step forward the Rhondda Waste Company, the Rhondda-Cynon-Taff council's own contractor. Once again puralite filter cake was mixed with household waste with predictably smelly results.

Nantygwydion tip was built to last 40 years by the old Rhondda council in 1986. But it has been a disaster since it overran its budget by £4.3m in 1987. It was bailed out by the Welsh office on condition it took waste from other councils and private waste disposal merchants alike.

As a result of the low price charged by the Rhondda Waste Co, Nantygwydion has become very popular. Waste from as far away as Carmarthen and Bristol has been dumped there, and the tip's lifespan has been halved. The pressure on the sewage system has caused such a stink that enraged locals have now forced the council to stop the dumping of puralite.

Biffa, whose waste it is, isn't worried, however. It has appealed to the Welsh office for permission to dump puralite in Trecatti again. The appeal will be referred to the Environment Agency, which no doubt will consult its regional environment protection advisory committee. This committee benefits from the experience of chemistry teacher and councillor David Morgan Lewis, chairman of the Rhondda-Cynon-Taff council's environmental health committee, and Mr Berian Griffiths, landfill director for, er, Biffa Waste.

TWO FACES OF THE WEEK

CAMDEN resident Dipak Dar recently fell behind with his council tax payments to the Labour authority after becoming ill.

When his reached £655.62, Mr Dar received letters from his MP Glenda Jackson (sympathetic), Camden finance director John Mabey (fairly sympathetic) and the council's policy chair John Mills (not very sympathetic). He wrote: "If there are arrears... the solution surely is to pay them off."

Is this the John Mills who ran a company from his Camden Town flat without paying business rates until 1992 when his wife, Barbara, became director of public prosecutions? And is this the same John Mills who, when it was revealed that he owed £30,000 in backdated rates, avoided paying all but £6,000 by cleverly hiding behind poll tax legislation which wiped out outstanding rates debts? Er, yes it is.

A COGLEY IN THE MACHINE

LIVERPOOL council has broken records for the fourth year running by setting the highest council tax in the land: people living in a three-bedroomed semi must pay an extortionate £1,110.66 a year for the privilege.

One person who doesn't have to pay so much, however, is director of education Frank Cogley. He is lucky enough to live on the Wirral. Not only that, but it emerged at recent budget deliberations that he still hasn't paid off the £200,000 bridging loan he borrowed from the council way back in 1991 (*Eyes passim*).

The loan, which for the first 18 months was interest free, was given on the understanding that Cogley would repay it once he had sold his home in Cambridgeshire, against which it was secured. Cogley *has* finally sold his house there, but according to city treasurer Phil Kelly: "The net sum realised from the sale (was) insufficient to clear the loan." Cogley still has £96,000 outstanding which is *unsecured* and being paid off on favourable terms from his monthly salary. He is under pressure to secure a private mortgage on his Wirral home and use this to pay back the council. His earlier suggestion that the council buy his Wirral home and rent it back to him didn't go down well with cash-strapped city leaders.

Lowly council workers are furious at the preferential treatment Cogley has received over six years. But their complaints will cut no ice with chief executive Peter Bounds. He got a £125,000 loan from his employer in 1991.

RED FACES OF THE WEEK

ISLINGTON councillor James Winston has caused embarrassment in the Tony Blair's Barnsbury ward which elected him in 1994.

Since then, however, Winston has parted company from the party. Next month he will be standing at Bow Street magistrates' court where he faces six charges related to housing benefit, three each of forgery and false accounting.

Southwark is not a happy Labour ship either. The internal party report into the behaviour of councillor Ian Wingfield, who was forced to stand down as candidate in the Wirral South by-election after allegations that he beat up two women, was due at the end of January but has still not materialised.

Wingfield allegedly beat up his former wife and a former girlfriend. *If* Wingfield has done anything wrong, voters in Newington ward want to know why it's all right for *them* to be represented by a woman-beater but not people in Wirral South.

Meanwhile in St Giles ward Labour councillor Vincent Feiner has been sacked from his day job as a national officer of the Broadcasting Entertainment and Cinematograph Theatre Union (BECTU) after he was found to be doing council work while telling BECTU he was too ill to work. The Labour group is resisting calls for an inquiry to find out how Feiner also managed to claim £7,000 in council expenses over the last tax year.

IN BRIEF

KINGSTON: Does the Lib Dem council know the party is sponsoring the traffic reduction bill in parliament? It pushed through a plan to turn the town centre into a 500-space car park, supermarket and entertainment complex, with no official consultation and despite a 4,000-name petition. A study by British Gas, the site owner, admits it will attract over 1,500 *more* cars — a novel way to reduce traffic.

HACKNEY: The Labour split has taken an ugly new turn. After Hettie Peters, the Stalinist old guard has singled out another unsuspecting target: "new" Labourite Josh Lamb. The councillors are using finance department officers to trawl Lamb's council tax records and rent book payments for the slightest indiscretion. If they find nothing they'll do him anyway — as with Peters.

NORTH CORNWALL: Applications to build more wind farms keep being turned down. How odd that one of the impartial planners responsible, Steve Atkinson, should have been seen at a government-sponsored debate in London speaking in favour of... nuclear power and against wind energy!

TOWER HAMLETS: Labour is fighting a losing battle to keep cartels out of Petticoat Lane, which is meant to be for small traders. Though cartels are illegal, the Turkish GEM cartel runs a number of stalls — and council market officers. Chief market inspector Serjio Lantano resigned recently after a senior officer was seen loading electrical goods into a van belonging to GEM and then being entertained by the GEM boys in a Whitechapel clip joint.

James MacLaren

IN *Eye* 910 we said the provost of Renfrewshire was accompanied to Germany by James MacLaren who had previously voted in favour of the trip. In fact, Councillor MacLaren did not accompany Nancy Allison on the trip and we apologise for this error.

LUVVIES

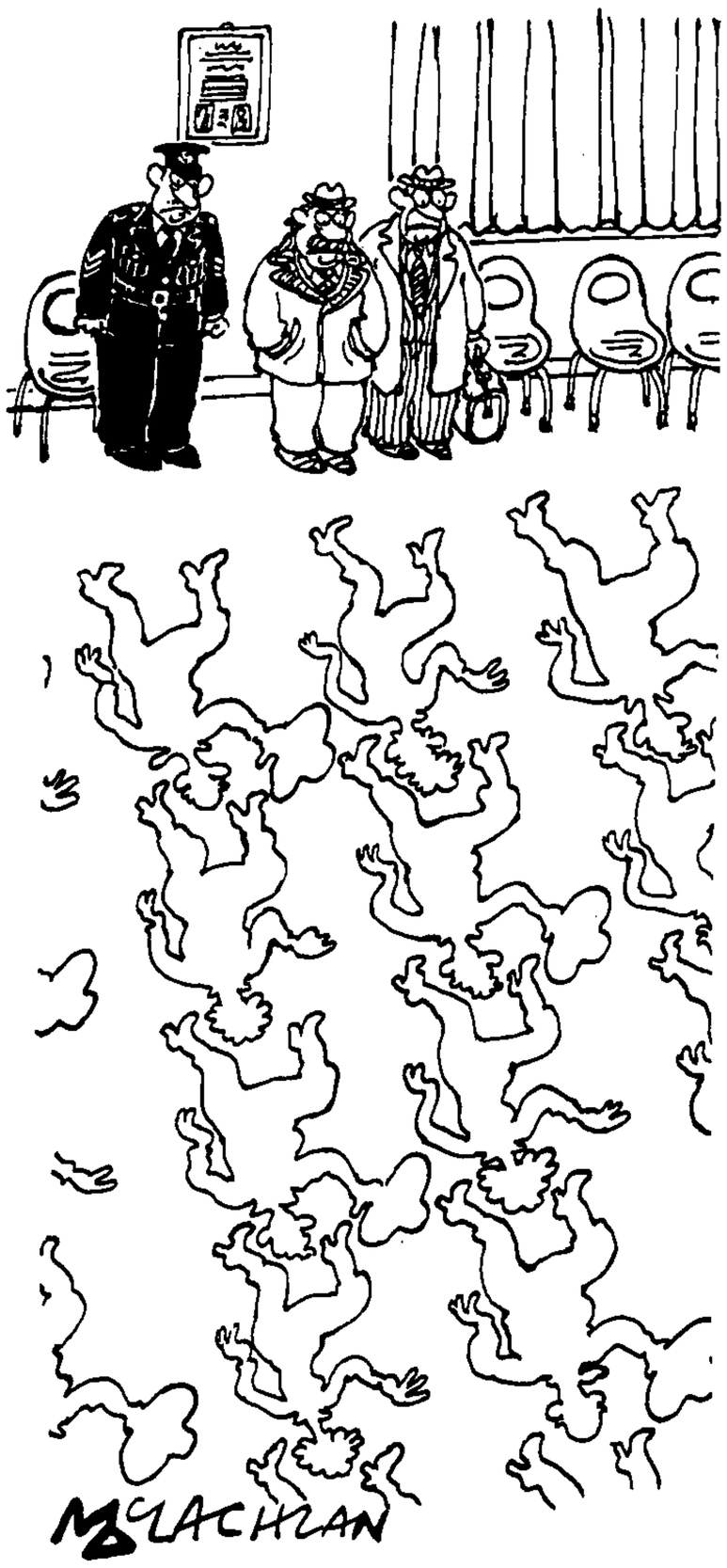
Vanity was a big issue, a big sin in our family, so anything self-regarding or narcissistic was wicked, and choosing to be an actress was the *ultimate*. That's probably why I didn't like it at first. But now I just love having a piece of paper with black and white stuff on it and having to turn that into flesh and blood. It's practically religious...

KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS
Time Out

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

YOBS

HUSBAND



"I understand the Press are already calling it 'The Great Line-Dance Massacre'..."

LIVID MARXISM

ITN bosses may be regretting their blizzard of libel writs against *Living Marxism*, the obscure mag of the Revolutionary Communist Party, which has claimed that the famous TV pictures of emaciated inmates at the Trnopolje and Omarska camps during the Bosnian war were a hoax.

By its heavy-handed litigation, ITN has merely given far more publicity to a story which would otherwise have sunk without trace. Worse still, it has allowed the *Living Marxism* crew to present themselves as persecuted martyrs.

At a fund-raising event for the mag two weeks ago, *LM* editor Mick Hume promised to screen "the unedited ITN footage". But in fact his little movie show lasted for only about 12 minutes. Asked about this by a group of puzzled journalism students, Hume explained that it was "impractical" to show the whole film as it was seven hours long. When he admitted that the footage had been cut, and its sequence rearranged, the students were even more puzzled, wondering how he could describe it as "unedited".

What was the response of the man who, only half an hour before, had attacked ITN for stifling debate? "I don't have time for questions like this," he snapped, before turning and disappearing into the throng.

Also present at the meeting was Thomas Deichmann, author of the original *Living Marxism* article, billed as a prominent German journalist and expert on the Balkans who had given evidence to the War Crimes Tribunal.

Deichmann did indeed appear before the tribunal — as a defence witness for Bosnian Serbs accused of genocide. But his expertise is pretty slender. Until 1993 he was a civil engineer in Frankfurt, but then decided to set himself up as a "journalist". Since 1994, he told the tribunal, he had worked for the London International Research Exchange, studying the coverage of the war in Bosnia. His main contact at the Exchange was one Philip Hammond, described as a "media specialist" who provided Deichmann with much useful information and advice.

Very impressive — except that the London International Research Exchange, which isn't listed in any telephone directory, is actually an offshoot of the Revolutionary Communist Party. And the great "media specialist" Philip Hammond, whose in-depth research was so invaluable to Deichmann, turns out to be the circulation manager of... *Living Marxism*.

WATERWORLD

THERE is no doubt who is to blame for the outbreak of poisoning by tap water that has afflicted more than 160 people in west Hertfordshire: Ian Byatt, water regulator.

Cryptosporidium may be the parasite responsible, but ever since privatisation the constant message to the utilities, the Three Valleys Water Company included, has been: cut charges and go slow on introducing expensive measures to improve water quality.

As long ago as 1992 Byatt said: "The cost of purifying water to meet European standards is more than we can afford..." At a press conference he also bridled at the idea that our water could be described as poisonous and drank a glass to prove it.

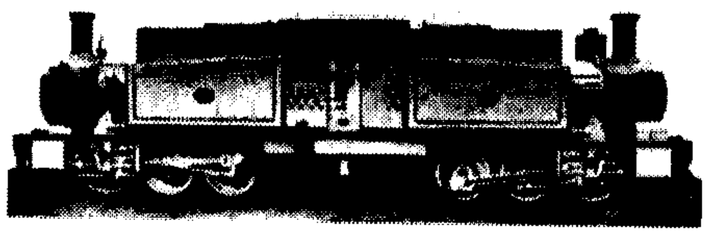
He claimed traces of pesticide in our water were "like an aspirin tablet in an Olympic swimming pool". He should tell that to the tens of thousands of people in Hertfordshire who are being forced to boil their water and the 160 (so far) diarrhoea victims.

Then in 1993 he was fighting a Brussels directive demanding higher standards. He said there was a difference between perfection and standards required for health. He was supported by OFWAT National Customer Council's chairman, Jim Gardner, who is supposed to be the public's champion. He said: "The Council is not opposed in principle to higher standards for drinking water... But where improvements can be justified on grounds of benefits in relation to costs they must take place at a pace that is affordable... Our concern is only for the bills that customers will have to pay."

Late in the day Three Valleys is now introducing a new, *expensive* water treatment to filter out pesticides.

Meanwhile the industry is wrestling with the question of whether it can provide enough water this summer. The Water Services Association, representing nine out of ten major utilities, promised 40 million customers at the start of the year that it would provide "the water they want when they want it" and never again subject them to standpipes, rota cuts and hosepipe bans.

Sensible people washed their cars for the last time and filled saucepans ready for the coming drought. Sure enough, within a month the Water Companies Association, representing the smaller firms that have always been privately owned and serve 10 million people, announced that the approach of permanent drought unless something is done now. Demand is rising and the climate changing. Rota cuts and hosepipe bans would become routine. The water companies could spend less on their shareholders and more on replacing leaky pipes and, if the situation is as serious as the WCA says, start investing in desalination equipment, like Saudi Arabia. But in real life nothing will be done.



SIGNAL FAILURES

RAILTRACK's investment plans are so thin the privatised company had to stuff its recent Network Management Statement with other people's investments.

The 76-page glossy report is designed to generate positive publicity from Railtrack's mundane maintenance work. A table of agreed enhancements for the whole of Britain over the next 10 years contains only 10 projects, including a millennium footbridge over the Thames.

Seven are funded entirely or primarily by money from *outside* Railtrack. The only project involving substantial Railtrack cash (£140m) is upgrading the West Coast line. This would have progressed years ago had privatisation not got in the way. Railtrack's flagship project, Thameslink 2000, is funded entirely by taxpayers — Railtrack was given a debt write-off of £566m at its flotation to cover this scheme.

"We have firm commitments to open two lines for passenger services: Robin Hood Phase 3 (in Nottinghamshire) and Hednesford to Rugeley," states the report. These, and other schemes listed, are funded entirely by local authorities. Railtrack is even cutting back on basic renewals: the report's small print lists several signalling schemes which Railtrack has abandoned or scaled-down.

THE government has helped its newest friends, the would-be millionaires in the rolling stock leasing business, by banning local authorities from buying new trains.

Instead, they must *hire* trains from the likes of Eversholt and Porterbrook leasing companies. Grants would have been available for buying trains, but hiring them adds to the operating costs the council has to foot, so passengers are stuck with overcrowded trains.

GNER, owned by Sea Containers, took over the King's Cross to Edinburgh line last year and immediately started a connecting bus between its trains and Lincoln. This undermines a rail service by another operator (see *Eye* 897) and shows the folly of splitting BR between 25 different operators who are interested only in their own fiefdoms.

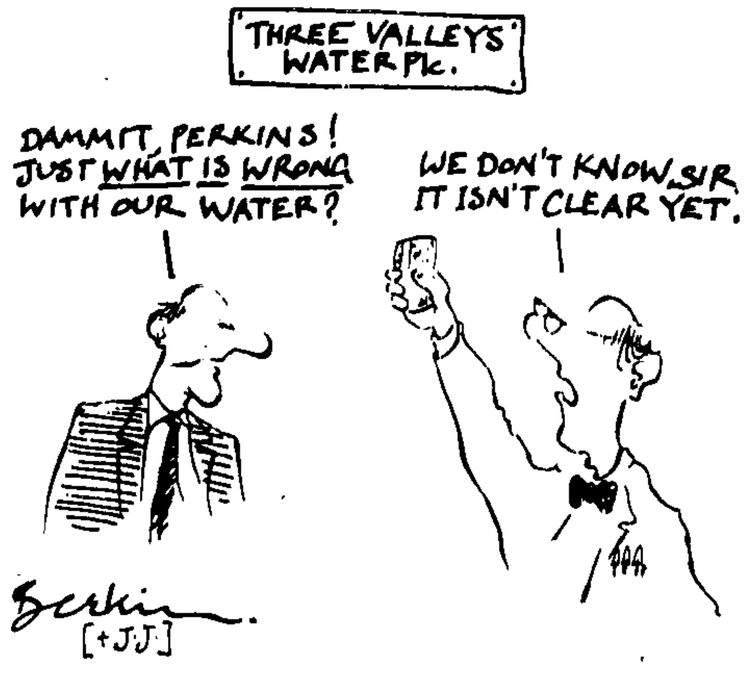
GNER is also showing the folly of handing a key franchise to James Sherwood, GNER's president, who said in 1993: "There is little justification for provincial services." Now GNER is pondering how it can close Welwyn North, a local station which gets in the way of GNER's fast buck (*shurely "fast trains"?*) According to *Modern Railways* magazine, chief executive Christopher Garnett is wondering whether the station is worth the inconvenience to GNER "given that people could drive to Welwyn Garden City".

Closing Welwyn North would make the local train service inaccessible to people who don't have cars — but this is of no interest to GNER, since the local trains are run by a different operator.

ONE *Eye* reader was lucky enough to catch a Stagecoach train this month, but even then the service couldn't quite make it into Waterloo station.

The rear half of the train stopped outside the station and a loudspeaker announcement told passengers: "Owing to a signalman's error, the train has arrived at a platform on which it does not fit. Will all passengers please leave through the luggage car near the front of the train."

'Dr B. Ching'



Letters

Lookalike

Thatcher

Evans

Sir,

I wonder if any other readers have noticed the remarkable resemblance between the "new look" Lady Thatcher and the Young Persons' Popular Entertainer Mr Chris Evans? Could it be that another senior female political figure will be happily reunited with a long lost love child? Though perhaps Mr David Evans MP (no relation?) would prefer a more robust description.

Yours faithfully,
NICK READ,
Cromford, Derbyshire.

Supporting role

Sir,

We are all very grateful to Alfred Sherman for his support of "self determination and equal national religious rights" in former Yugoslavia (EYE 919), although I cannot remember him being particularly vocal about it in 1990, when Slovenia and Croatia proposed a confederation on the same basis, by which, no doubt, Yugoslavia would have continued to exist, albeit with far less Serbian hegemony.

As for "Croat Clero-Fascist, Moslem Jihadists and German Drang Nach Osten", Mr Sherman should give up repeating the nonsense emanating from the Serbian Academy of Science & Art, as this was quite adequately echoed by the leading intellectuals like Baroness Chalker and Michael-El Candillo-Portillo and put to practice at Vukovar and Srebrenica.

Moreover, Mr Sherman should be grateful to the "American Neo-Imperialists" for their intervention; it saved the Serbs from military defeat in Bosnia and with the Dayton "agreement" recognised them as the only single nationality — the other being a "Muslim-Croat entity" — whatever that means.

*On the whole Mr Sherman ought to go out more. He will find that, apart from the books by Rebecca West, Ivo Andric and the Serbian Academy, there are many more volumes on the subject — **some of them with pictures**, which I am sure, Mr Sherman will enjoy hugely.*

Yours,
JOHN BLAGOVIC.
London WC1.

O·B·N

Last week I dined at Dominic and Rosa Lawson's house and was seated between Mrs Wafic Said and Josephine Hart, the novelist who is Mrs Maurice Saatchi. Both ladies were wonderful to converse with and very, very nice.

TAKI
Sunday Times

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

Pulp fiction

Sir,

Your rather lowlife and entirely inaccurate attack on LM *magazine (21 Feb) forgot to mention the little detail of ITN's unprecedented attempt to gag the press, in response to our story about their award-winning pictures of Bosnian camp.*

ITN have demanded that we pulp every copy of February's issue of LM, *issued us with libel writs, and threatened legal action against anybody else who dares to touch Thomas Deichmann's story "The Picture that Fooled the World". As a result, a story which has been debated in respected papers across Europe has been blockaded in the one country where it ought to cause a scandal.*

I don't know which is the more depressing; the assault on press freedom by a media giant like ITN, or the spectacle of PRIVATE EYE *apparently supporting a mega-corporation's use of the libel laws to buy immunity from criticism through the courts.*

Your many readers who do still take a principled stand against Britain's censorship-for-hire libel laws might like to send donations to the LM *libel appeal, the Off The Fence Fund, at BM Off The Fence, London WC1N 3XX.*

Yours faithfully,
MICK HUME,
Editor, Living Marxism.

● ***Or see 'Livid Marxism' in the Colour Section***

Lookalike

William Hague

Ena Sharples

Sir,

I wonder if any other readers have noticed the striking resemblance between the secretary of state for Wales and the late Ena Sharples? Are they by any chance related? I think we should be told.

Yours faithfully
A.A. LOVELACE.
Hatfield, Herts.

Well red

Sir,

How predictable was George Napier's letter denouncing your coverage of a LIVING MARXISM *article. Doesn't* PRIVATE EYE *know by now that* LIVING MARXISM *is the **only** authority on Bosnia in the country?*

The Serbian regime must have saved itself a fortune in fees for PR consultants by slinging a few quid to a bunch of middle class communists to produce a glossy magazine full of propaganda for them. Or should I call them communists? Maybe for an organisation that in a few short years has gone from being the Revolutionary Communist Party to LIVING MARXISM *magazine and now simply* LM, *that is not appropriate. But then surely members of the RCP aren't ashamed to say who they really are, eh George Napier?*

Yours,
TED HUNTER,
London SE23.

Black watch

Sir,

With reference to your review questioning the credibility of the facts of the NO CHILD OF MINE *docudrama, you state: "There was also something pious about the fact that the single non-abusive male character was the only black one."*

*Well, rather than being "pious", perhaps this was one area where, for once, the programme makers got it right about black people. For isn't it the case that where the hideous crime of paedophilia is concerned, the typical culprit is **male, heterosexual** and **white**?*

We've had more than our fair share of negative images on TV and elsewhere, thank you very much, so don't be so surprised when the black character in a drama-documentary is the good guy.

Yours,
MAGGIE MANSI,
London NW10.

"Amazing! We still get mail for them, and they left years ago"

Hoe hoe hoe

Sir,

*I can't speak for Q. Coaker (*EYE *919), but I read the* EYE *every fortnight precisely because I **am** patriotic, and don't want to see Britain dragged into the gutter by dishonest politicians, bent coppers and brain-dead journalists. The unique role the* EYE *plays in weeding out the corrupt, the greedy and the incompetent is not at all "destructive" — quite the opposite.*

But then again, Q. Coaker is fortunate to live in South Africa, a country whose history is happily free of any corruption and incompetence in high places.

Yours sincerely,
PETER HUGHES (DR),
London E17.

Lookalike

McCartney

McAliskey

Sir,

Looking at a recent photograph of Bernadette McAliskey talking to reporters, I noticed a striking resemblance between her and our recently knighted Beatle, Paul McCartney. But whereas one has recently been a visitor to Buckingham Palace, the other has recently visited Holloway. There can have been very little similarity between Her Majesty's Prison and Her Majesty's Residence!

Yours,
MISS MULLICENT KINTYRE,
"D" Wing, Orkney Open Prison, Scotland.

Sworn oaths

Sir,

The most offensive thing about the EYE *these days is your insistence on replacing perfectly acceptable Anglo-Saxonisms such as "f*ck" and "c*nt" with euphemistic asterisks (eg Tackwatch,* EYE *919). If I wanted to be protected from the living language I'd read the* S****Y T***S, *which is presumably from where you picked up this disgusting habit.*

Regards,
PAUL HETHERINGTON,
Cambridge.

Case history

Sir,

If, on the other hand, Lord Longford had **not** *made such a public fuss about Myra Hindley, the following two things would probably have happened. Firstly, the families of her victims would probably have coped a little better, without having been constantly reminded about the case. Secondly, Myra Hindley would probably have had her chances of parole* **properly** *assessed, without interference from career politicians with an eye to catching votes.*

I've no brief for MH, but it doesn't take a genius to see that things would have been better all round!

Yours sincerely,
PAUL THOMPSON,
Scone, Perthshire.

Sinister plot

Sir,

Shome mishtake shurely! Your article about South Ayrshire council's exotic garden (21 Feb) was misleading and factually inaccurate. There is no exotic garden. There is only a disabled access and associated works. Neither have there been **any** *compulsory redundancies in South Ayrshire council.*

There **have** *been budget savings but there has also been a near £1m investment in nursery education without recourse to the government's voucher scheme. Any resemblance, therefore, between the article and a badly orchestrated local Tory press campaign is entirely deliberate.*

Yours sincerely,
COUN IAN WELSH,
Leader, South Ayrshire Council.

Depth charge

Sir,

Your "apology" to Lambeth council's high salaried chief executive Heather Rabbatts, on page 13 of your organ dated 7 March 1997, contains words which most of our younger members may find puzzling. Why should a reference to "Ugandan discussions", "in-depth" or otherwise, warrant any apology?

Perhaps we should be told!

Yours anticipatingly,
ANIL SATYABRATI,
Commonwealth Poetry Society, London E1.

Novel approach

Sir,

Your book reviewer's chauvinism is becoming absurd. He wants more novels about "real English people walking about in a more or less recognisable world". If he had lived in the twenties and thirties, he would have had to put up with book after book about Africans, Indians, Mexicans, Italians, Australians and other unreal people, written by Forster, Lawrence, Waugh, Graham Greene, ie most leading novelists of the time. For most of this century the best writers have been cosmopolitan, and if your reviewer tries to row against this current, no amount of huffing and puffing will save him from disappearing in a shower of froth.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID CRAIG,
Burton-in-Kendal.

White bait

Sir,

Re: World of Soccer, EYE *919. Although we are not "famous throughout Europe" (yet), Sunderland also currently field an all-white premiership side. Obviously this will all change when Peter Reid spends Bob Murray's millions on Patric Viera, Paul Ince, Ronaldo and Patrick Kluivert... won't it Peter?*

Yours sincerely,
FRUSTRATED OF THE FULLWELL,
Address unknown.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"He has those telescopic legs that can turn a Leeds ball into an Arsenal one."
JOHN MOTSON, BBC1
(John Quinn)

"...And the FA thinks it's really unfair that UEFA have thrown all their apples behind Germany."
ADAM MINOT, Radio 4
(Mr S. J. Szita)

"If anyone scored against Milan it had to be a goal."
RAY WILKINS, Channel 4
(Christopher Griggs)

Ed Stewart: *You were 58 two days ago.*
Contestant: *That's right.*
Ed Stewart: *Can I ask how old you were?*
Contestant: *58.*
Radio 2
(P. Church)

"Britain was very different in my grandfather's day. There were children walking around without proper feet."
3rd EARL ATLEE, Radio 5 Live
(Anon)

I-SPY *Harare, Zimbabwe*

Submitted by Tony Bishop. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Letter from America

from Our Own Correspondent

CREDIBLE British forensic scientists? There are still some, it seems; and three in particular are playing key roles in destroying the US government's case against Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nicholls, the alleged Oklahoma City bombers.

The prosecution's case in this post-OJ "trial of the century" starts in Denver on Easter Monday and is already in deep trouble. The state of the FBI is such that four of the key "feds" responsible for putting McVeigh and Nicholls in the dock cannot even be considered for the witness stand.

One, Larry Potts, deputy director of the FBI, no less, and the man initially in charge of the Oklahoma investigation, has been suspended on administrative leave for 18 months. He's facing charges of obstruction of justice and destruction of evidence — about as serious as it gets for an FBI agent — and might yet join some of those he's locked up for a long stint in a federal penitentiary.

Three others, all senior forensic scientists who played leading roles in the Oklahoma investigation, have been "transferred" to other duties in recent weeks. Their problem is the imminent publication of a report, the product of an 18-month investigation of the hopelessly-tainted FBI laboratory.

The seriousness of allegations against the lab was such that in September 1995 the US justice department decided the panel of forensic experts set up to look at the place had better have a majority of foreigners on it. Step forward Gerard Murray, the chief explosives expert at the British government's laboratory at Carrickfergus in Northern Ireland.

Although the report on the lab is not yet public, leaks — and the transfer of the three FBI scientists — imply that Murray and his Canadian colleagues uncovered plenty of shortcomings. These probably include perjury, contamination of evidence and the slanting of conclusions to favour the prosecution.

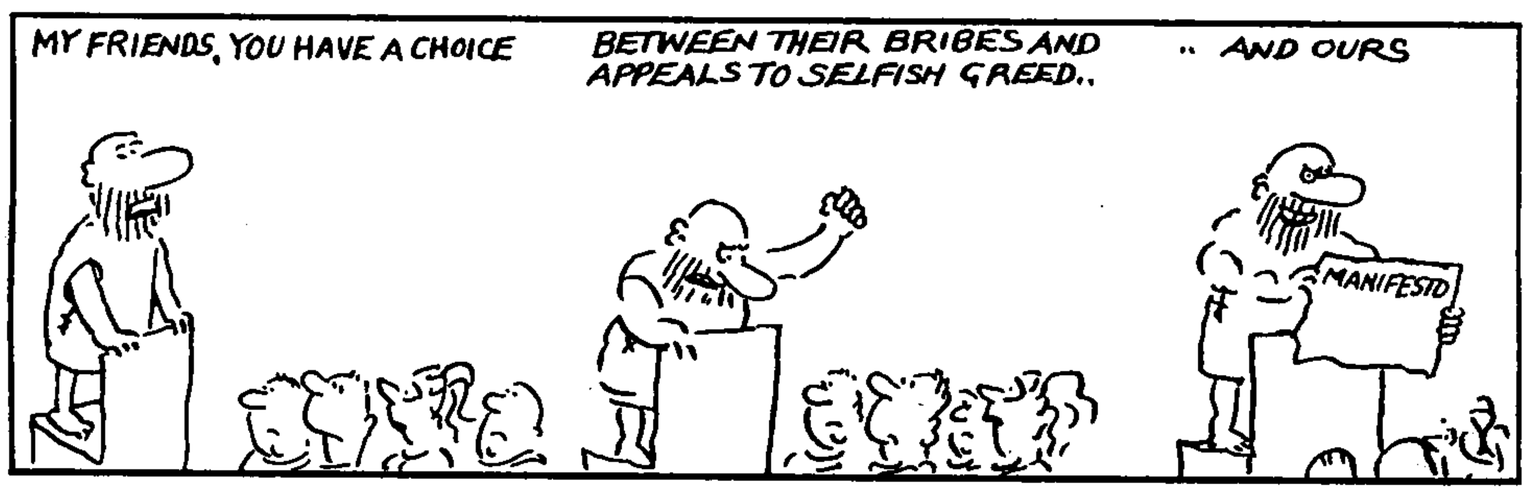
Two other British forensic scientists, Dr John Lloyd and Prof Brian Caddy, have certainly been shocked by the standards of the FBI lab. Called in by McVeigh's defence to look at the lab reports on the case and interview a lab whistleblower who is expected to testify against the FBI, neither of them has minced his words.

"If these are the ones [reports] to be presented to the court as evidence then I am appalled by the structure and information content," concluded Caddy. "The reports are purely conclusory in nature," says a startled Lloyd in a written submission to the defence team. "Their structure seems to be designed to confuse."

Evidence and its preservation doesn't seem to have been too big a concern for the FBI lab, especially on the big cases where it's essential to "get results", as FBI director Louie Freeh put it.

Since the Brits gave their opinions, it has emerged that McVeigh's clothes arrived unsealed and were left lying around in a lab which, many who work there agree, is riddled with explosive residue from other cases: a setting which is, in short, contaminated. But what better way to "get results?" You or your belongings may not arrive guilty — but you and they both leave with a charge sheet attached.

HOM SAP BY DAVID AUSTIN



FUNNY OLD WORLD

"I opened my eyes in hospital, and now I have to lie here with broken ribs for six weeks without moving," lamented Max Dadeshvily from his bed on an orthopaedic ward in Ichilov, Tel Aviv. "I'm not angry with the guy, but I can't understand why he had to jump on my god damned *neck*. OK. He wants to die, fine. So he

jumps, and nothing happens to him. I want to live, and now I'll be crippled for life."

Max, 26, a clerk in a local clinic, was speaking after hearing a full explanation from police of what had happened to him on Saturday night. "I'd gone out with my sister and five friends to see Evita, but we couldn't get tickets for the film, so we sat in a cafe in the lobby of the Opera tower, drinking, eating, and laughing. Meanwhile, this old guy of seventy-two has acute depression and decides to commit suicide, so he takes the escalator to the third floor of the tower, shouts 'everybody wants to go to heaven but nobody wants to die — but not me!' and jumps head first into the lobby. I'm enjoying a Pimms, leaning back in my chair, when all of a sudden a suicide case falls on me from nowhere. I'm unconscious and being rushed to hospital, while he just gets up, realises he's not dead, and walks off unharmed. Thank you God."

Police later confirmed that an unnamed elderly man had been apprehended, and will be prosecuted for negligence. *(Yedith Ahronoth [Israel], 10/2/97. Spotter: Lior Deshe)*

—o—

"We are not jailing you for eating people, but for practising sorcery," the head of a judicial tribunal told three women in Bondoukou, Ivory Coast, while passing sentence. "You have said you are very very sorry, but practising sorcery is an established offence, so we are sending you to prison for a year."

Earlier, Yaoua Agninoua, Kossia Mize, and Koffi Mouroufie had confessed to eating a total of thirty-five people. "First of all, we transformed ourselves into birds on the orders of the chief," they said, "and we flew into the rooms of our victims through open windows, by night while they were asleep. Then we transformed the victims into grasscutters [large rodents], carried them home in our beaks, cooked them in a pot, and ate them. They were delicious."

The women were jailed under Article 204 of Ivory Coast's penal code, which forbids creating a public nuisance. *(Bangkok Post, 5/2/97. Spotter: Brian Dawes)*

—o—

"It is quite horrible picking them up sometimes," confessed 3-D technician Peggy Atherton, "because they are smelly and bloody. Sometimes it is even hard to tell what species they were before they got flattened. I like the ones that are quite squashed, quite abstract."

Atherton, who works at the Harrow Campus, was talking to reporters about her artistic speciality. "My still life work begins with collecting dead animals from the roadside. I dip their bodies in porcelain, then cremate them in the kiln until the flesh and skin burn away. When only the bones remain, they turn into bone china. Then I take the finished piece back to the place where I found the body, and leave it there. They usually get stolen within minutes.

"About a hundred and fifty road kills have passed through my kiln, but I try not to look down when I'm walking nowadays. Otherwise, you just see dead animals everywhere." (Clarion [University of Westminster], March 1997. Spotter: Richard Bonfield)

COMPILED BY

Victor Lewis-Smith

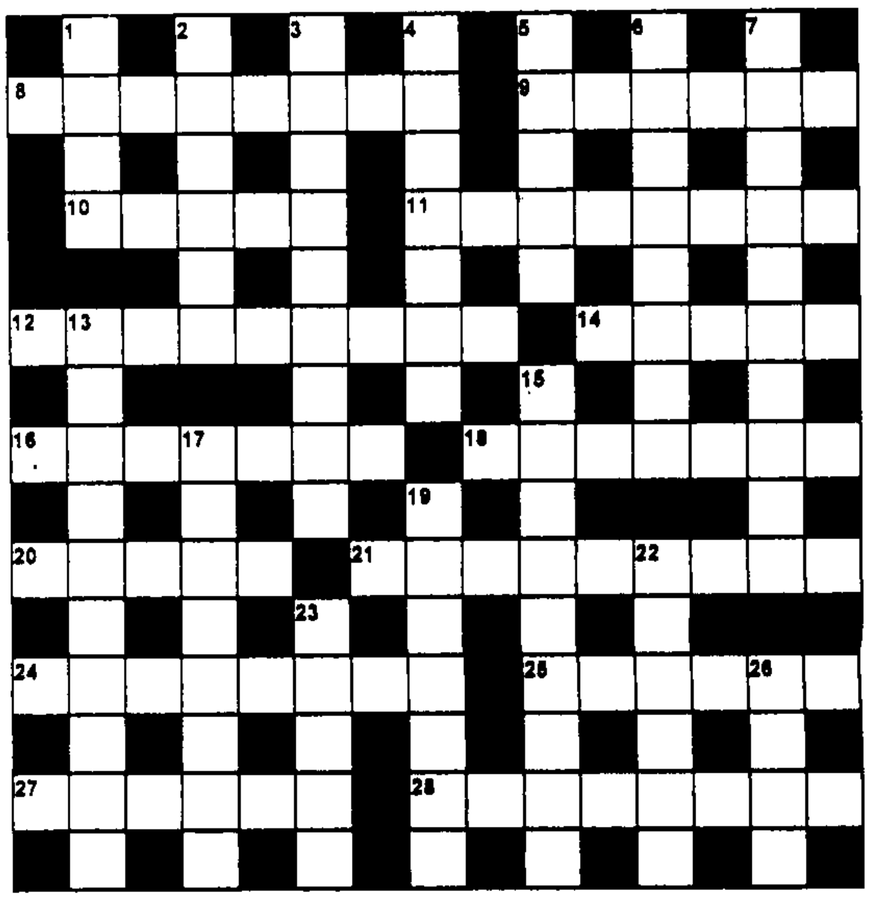
The Lottery Winners

TURNER

8 MILLION POUNDS, DIANA, JUST IMAGINE.. THE CARS, THE POLO PONIES.. THE FINE WINES..
THE HOLIDAYS, THE HOUSES.. THE DRESSES..
SO WHY BOTHER WORKING LUIGI?
IT KEEPS ME OUTA THE HOUSE!

EYE CROSSWORD 75

by Cyclops — *£100 prize*



ACROSS

8 OK, Hogg confused with names — being let go of by the government! (4,4)
9 Items of a personal nature we tuck away at the back (6)
10 American flipping number two taking time off for a snack! (5)
11 Yes, any more slaughtered English stock? (8)
12 Act of independence rued by the hospital manager git not up to untimely change? (6,3)
14 (see 27)
16 Too proud to do some brown-nosing around Tory leader? (5-2)
18 Bad thing, recruiting Hattersley as Brenda's agent! (7)
20 Tramp needs hard stuff on the way back (5)
21 Our revelations of those involved in business of ethnic cleansing and sex with youth (2,3,4)
24 'Lippy' has left Dicky with bugger all (8)
25 Drips frustrated by this scrubber? (6)
27/14 He has kept livestock in case he's regarded as a big pseud artistically (6,5)
28 (see 6)

DOWN

1 Strip off, boys! (4)
2 Court favourite sees a bit of a shag as sinful (6)
3 Making an appearance — and beating Tatchell to it? (6,3)
4 No oil painting too awful to steal from somebody? (4,3)
5 An occasion for racy women to flaunt what they've got on top (5)
6/28 Eden reportedly transgressed against the Vatican, feeling bad about having everything (8,8)
7 An MP who re-discovered an issue to really care about? (5,5)
13 Shag party organised around love triangle's secrets revealer (10)
15 Just part of the pitch of Redwood and like-minded party members? (5,4)
17 Shadow member's first to get a drink (8)
19 Show support for candidate — the 'ack that came in last? (7)
22 Singer without organ accompaniment ousts top grade model revolutionary leader (6)
23 A queer sort of chap poring over pictures of Brenda, this traitor ... (5)
26 ...and here's another traitor — some system, Major! (4)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 27.03.97. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 74

Winner: LOTTIE REID

ACROSS: 7 Dounreay 8 Aztecs 10 Entomb 11 Scargill 12/23 Conjugal rights 13 Orient 15 Suicide 18 Rat race 20 Physic 21 Head girl 24 Anarchic 26 Dotage 27 Hernia 28 Gunboats

DOWN: 1 Borneo 2 Union Jacks 3 Bedbug 4 Eye Sell 5 Maradona 6 Stag 9/14 Colonic irrigation 14 (see 9) 16 Unhinged 17 Dickhead 19 Chicago 22 Ardent 23 (see 12) 25 Rank

The Secret Diary of John Major aged 47¾

Monday

I have had a very busy morning updating my Bastard books, which Mr Dr Mawhinney said I should put on the Internet. These are the entries under the letter "G":

Gorman, Mrs Teresa

But now I have a whole new page for Mr Sir George Gardiner who wrote in the paper that I was "just a pathetic little puppet operated by Mr Clarke". Well, even if it was true, which it is not, I would rather be Mr Clarke's puppet than have Sir James Goldsmith's hand up my bottom (forgive my French!), which has happened to Sir George. No wonder he looks so uncomfortable. But I do not wish to descend into personal abuse of such a sad, ugly, embittered, little has-been.

Tuesday

Today was the turning point. I am at last convinced that we are going to win the election, not that we weren't going to win, but now we definitely are. The reason for my confidence is that my wife Norman and I attended a glittering party given by my friend Lord Sir Tim Rice, the world-famous friend of Mr Lord Lloyd-Webber. It was the best party there has ever been, full of big names all of whom are going to vote Conservative.

They are:

Joan Collins, who is a very famous actress or writer, I can't remember which.

Lorraine Chase, who used to advertise Luton airport on the television.

Mr Sir Clifford Richard, who is a famous pop singer which will bring in the younger voters.

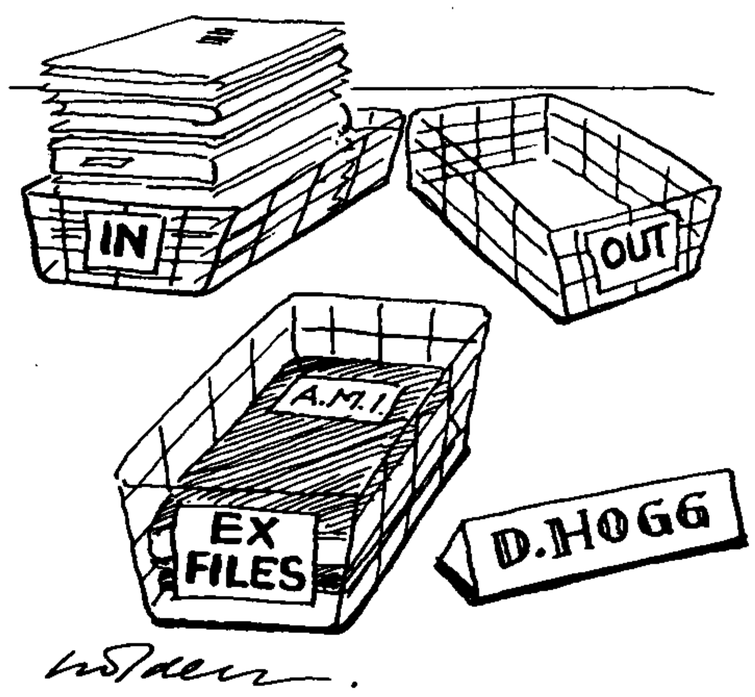
Miss Anneka Rice, who is presumably the daughter of Lord Sir Tim.

Barbara Windsor, who is also a film star.

With a line-up like this, how can we possibly lose? I was not inconsiderably annoyed, however, when in the middle of the party my brother Terry rang up Sir Tim on his mobile to say he was very sorry he couldn't make it, but he'd had an invitation to a "celebrity party". He did, however, promise that he would vote for me, providing he didn't vote for Mr Blair instead.

Wednesday

It has never been my policy to gloat over the misfortunes of my friend Mr Herr Kohl. Particularly not now that he is beset with difficulties, such as growing unemployment, a very small working majority in parliament, and now a huge miners' strike. Ha ha ha. They even say he is going to lose the next election. Ha ha ha. It is all a far cry from the situation here in Britain where I showed everyone how to deal with the miners back in 1984 (when I was under-secretary at the ministry of pensions)! If this goes on there will soon be "no Kohl left in Germany". (This very successful joke was written for me by Morris Norris, who is a very bright young man who used to write jokes for Mr Rifkind.)



Thursday

My friend Mr Hogg has won a parliamentary triumph. Mr Blair and his friends thought they could catch me out by discovering a report which Mr Hogg had by mistake put in his bottom drawer and forgotten about, warning that everyone was going to be poisoned by dirty meat. But Mr Hogg brilliantly stood his ground by pointing out that he was not going to resign, whatever they said, because everything he had done was very good. We all cheered and Mr Blair and his friends went away looking very "cowed". (This joke was written for me by Mr Norris Morris, a very bright young man who used to write jokes for Mrs Bottomley.)

Friday

My cabinet are suddenly full of new ideas which shows that we have not run out of steam. Mr Lilley, for example, has had a very clever idea to privatise all pensions. Mr Dorrell is going to privatise nursing homes for the elderly. And there is no stopping Mr Howard. He comes up with a new scheme every day. Today he announced a floating prison from America.

"Why have you all got so many ideas just before the election?" I asked jokingly.

Mr Howard replied quickly: "It's not because we want to make a good impression and get your job when you lose."

"That's alright then," I said and we all laughed, which shows that morale is very high.

Saturday

Today I went to Bath which is a town near Bristol to launch my new slogan, which was written for me by a Mr Boris Horace, a very brilliant young man who works on the Daily Telegraph.

"You can be sure of the Conservatives!"

This slogan is very original and used to be used to sell petrol before the War.

"Why did they stop using it?" I asked.

"Because it was out of date and people wanted a change," Mr Horace informed me helpfully.

Sunday

The conference is a huge success apart from my ex-friend Mrs Edwina Currie, who said that when I lost the election I should go quickly.

This is incredibly stupid of her on two counts:

a) I am not going to lose, like I did not last time.

b) If I *do* lose I will stay on, so I will not go either slowly or quickly.

Mrs Currie should stick to subjects she knows about, e.g. eggs.

Monday

This is not inconsiderably in no small measure a historic day. I have decided to go to the country and put an end to the uncertainty once and for all.

"Now you are certain to lose," joked my wife Norman as she took down the curtains, as part of her spring cleaning, I assume.

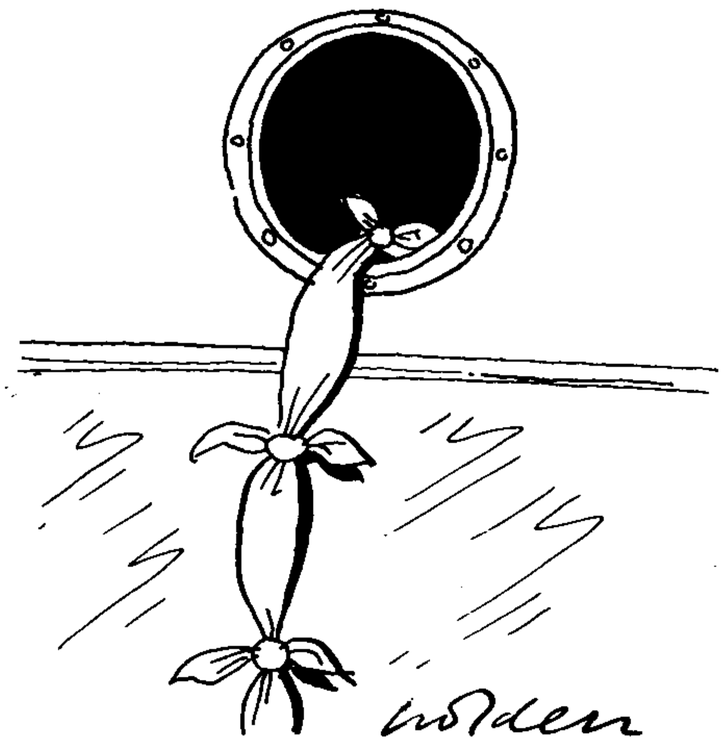
I went to see the Queen, who was very gracious as she always is. She was wearing a very fetching Red Rose and told me: "It is Red Rose Day. For Comic Relief. I am getting rid of a clown, you see."

I did not get the joke but thought it best to smile politely.

It was a very short interview, as the Queen does not like to waste time.

"You know the way out," she said, "or you will very soon."

She seemed in a very good mood, having won a large bet apparently on a horse at Cheltenham called "Major's Finished".



VICAR DISCOVERED DOING JOB SHOCK

by Our Religious Staff **Rev Nick Shopping**, team vicar of St Tesco's, Cornwall

A CHURCH of England vicar, the Reverend Goodie, has been discovered carrying out his duties amongst his congregation without attracting publicity of any kind.

Goodie, it was revealed, is neither homosexual nor conducting an adulterous affair with a parishioner's wife. What is more worrying for the church authorities is that he appears to believe in God and has not read any books by A.N. Wilson.

Goodie shocked parishioners recently by preaching against shoplifting, ramraiding, armed robbery and murder, citing only the Ten Commandments in his defence.

There were immediate calls for Goodie to be dismissed, but his Bishop, The Right Rev. Gary Soundbite said: "The C of E is a broad church and there has to be room for people with odd views who do not seek publicity."

LATE NEWS

Church lashed by politicians

THE CHURCH of England has been severely criticised by a group of all-denomination politicians over its handling of its economy. The report, "Crisis In Our Church", claims that millions of pounds which could have gone to the poor and needy have been wasted on misguided, capitalist schemes such as property speculation. Said a spokesman for the politicians: "The church was so busy trying to make money it couldn't even afford to pay its vicars a living wage. Some of them were forced to go on 'Thought for the Day' or even the Terry Wogan slot on Radio 2.

"The church really should keep its nose in its own affairs." *(Reuters)*

That Channel 4 Dinner Party Menu in full

Crudities

– ✻ –

Wallop of Cod with Chips on Shoulder

Traditional English Beef with Boiled Cabbies
(shurely cabbage? Ed.)

– ✻ –

To Follow

Anti-Pouff Pastry

Black Bastard Forest Gateau

– ✻ –

To drink

White whinge

Spanish Fly-on-wall

Those TV Election Debates in Full

April 3rd: Major v. Blair
April 4th: Blair v. Major *(replay)*
April 5th: Major v. Ashdown
April 6th: Ashdown v. Ashdown
April 7th: Salmond v. Sutch
April 8th: Goldsmith v. Sked
April 9th: Paisley v. Adams
April 10th: George Harrison v. Harry Krishna
April 11th: Major v. Blair *(repeat)*
April 12th: Ashdown & Blair v. Major & Trimble *(Men's Doubles)*
April 13th: Thatcher v. Benn *(Veterans)*
(That's enough debates. Ed.)

Who will be ringmaster in the greatest TV debate of the century? You choose...

Jeremy Paxman: Rough, tough, abrasive.
John Humphrys: Abrasive, tough, rough.
Jonathan Dimbleby: Tough, abrasive, rough.
Sir David Frost: Arse-licking bore *(shome mishtake shurely?)*

Great old jokes revisited

Majeux Tapestry

The Eve of the Battle of Hustings

EYEWITNESS FROM ALBANIA

by Our Man in Tirana
Phil Space

Tuesday

IT IS Tuesday morning in the small village of Nisdina. An old goat walks slowly down the street accompanied by his owner, an elderly woman dressed in a traditional headscarf and pair of trainers. Somewhere a cock crows loud enough to waken the dead. But the dead are not there to be woken.

As an old goat walks slowly down the mainstreet of the once thriving market town of Nisdina, I talk to an old woman, her head shrouded in the traditional scarf of this once-proud country.

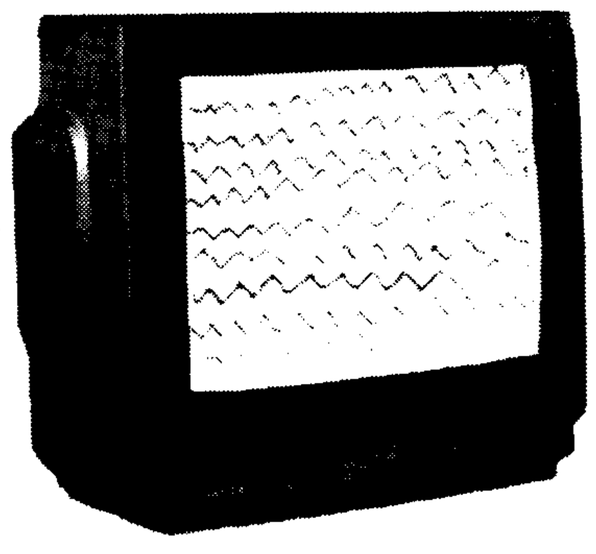
With a silent gesture she indicates that she is Kate Adie and she is looking for someone to interview.

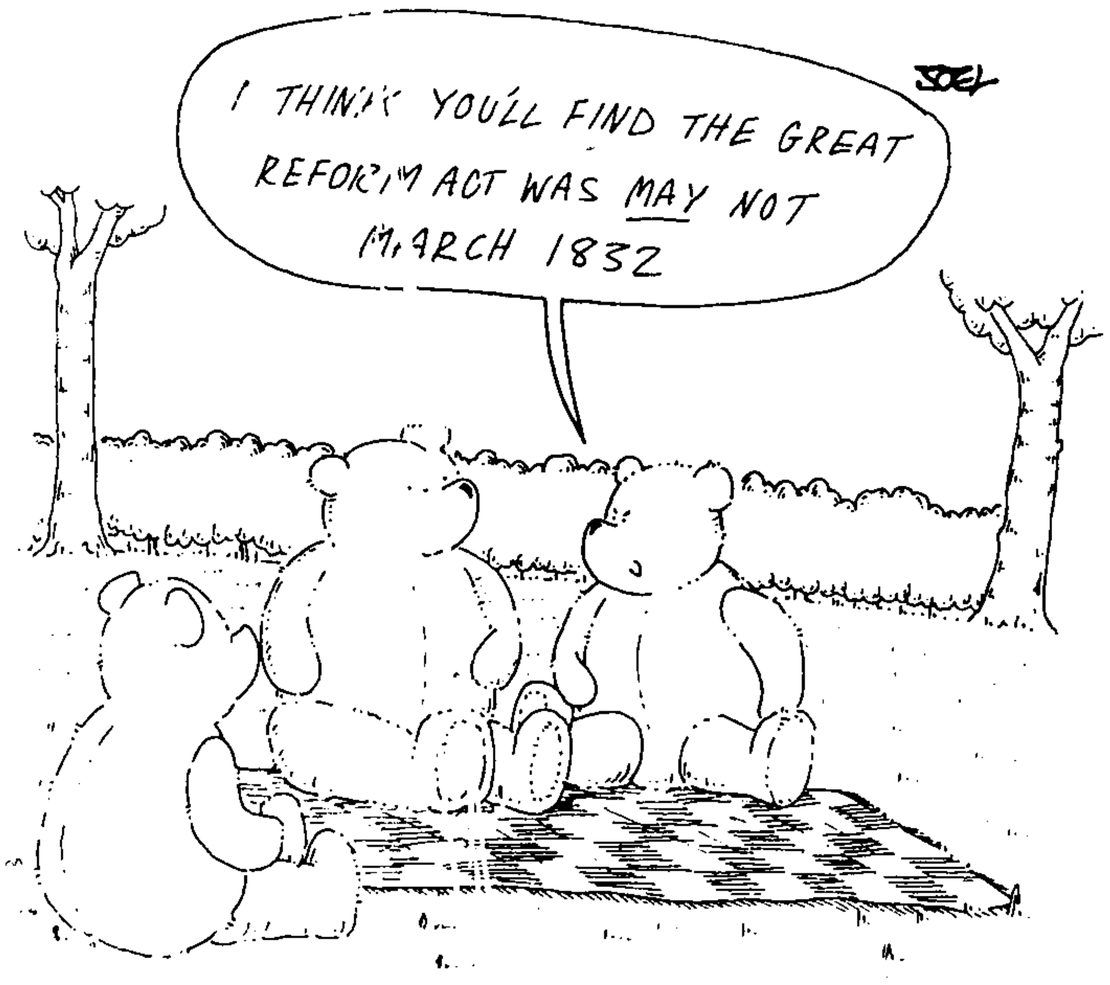
In the distance a cock crows. It is Tuesday. But for the Albanians who must live here it is just another day in Albania.

This is Phil Space, in Albania, Tuesday.

© *The Observer*

CHANNEL 5 What you will see





Teddy Bears Nitpick

TV Highlights

The Dimmer Party (Channel 4)

Obnoxious collection of socialites gather together over an expensive meal with their Old Etonian host, Jimmy. As time goes on, their extreme right-wing views become more and more apparent until they unwittingly reveal themselves as a group of reactionary idiots. Why Jimmy and his friends allowed a video of themselves to be made and shown to the entire country is a mystery.

Eye Rating: Say no

Goodbye Sweetheart (ITN)

Hapless John keeps trying to escape his drab present into the cosy past of the 1940s. Here he finds an England where people were friendlier and everyone supported the government. Sadly, in the 1990s John is hopelessly lost and keeps getting caught out in his "double life".

Eye Rating: Very laughable

Men Behaving Sadly (BBC1)

The unlovable lads have both been sacked from their jobs for being arrogant, loud-mouthed oafs! So Chris and Danny decide to go on a bender. They meet up with old drunk and wife-beater Paul, and decide to have a good time on the town!! A riot of not-shaving, drinking beer and flicking V-signs at people ensues, with hilarious consequences... They get hired again immediately!

Eye Rating: Z-z-z-z

Prisoner On Poop Deck H (Channel 4)

Incredible melodrama in which prisoners are put on board a floating penitentiary by a desperate Home Secretary. The latest in a series of feeble formats by soap writer Michael Howard. *(That's enough TV. Ed)*

"Well, go back to South America and see if I care!"

New From Labour

The BLAIRBIE Doll PM

Make friends with Tony and dress him up in whatever outfit will get your vote.

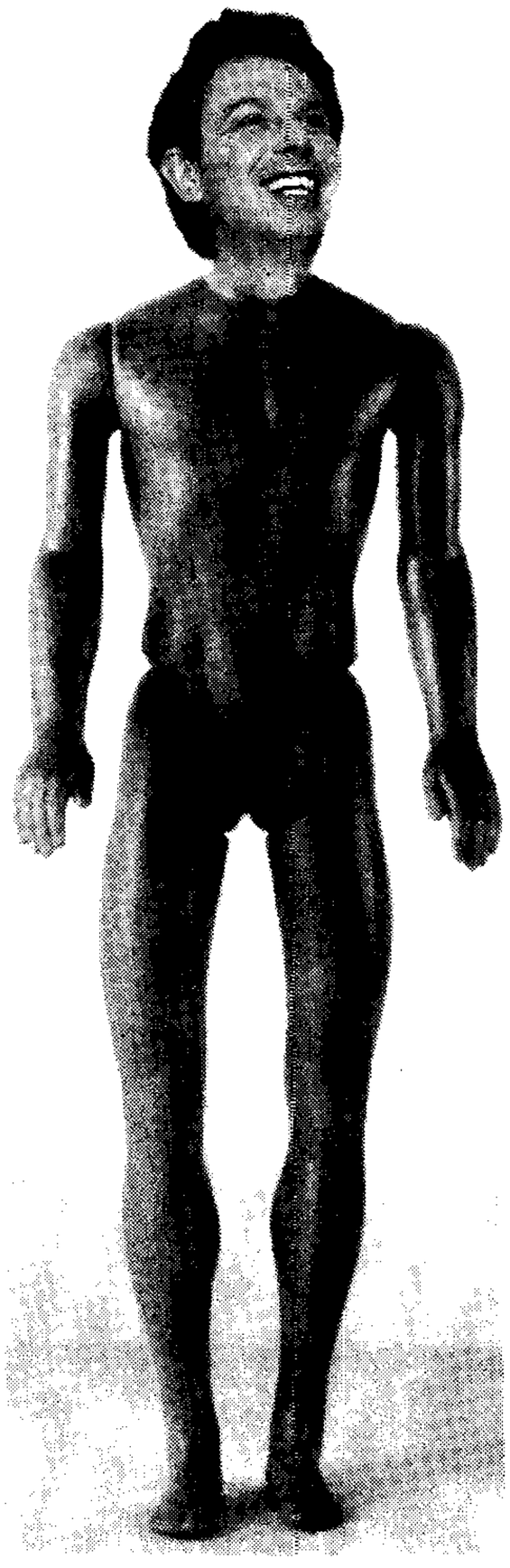
Hundreds of exciting costumes include

City Blairbie
3-piece suit, Old Fettes tie. Comes with: brief-case, mobile phone, copy of Financial Times. *Says: "No higher taxes."*

Country Blairbie
Barbour, Arran jersey, green wellies. Comes with: labrador dog, fishing rod, Kendal mintcake. *Says: "No higher foxes."*

Coronation Street Blairbie
Cloth cap, hob-nail boots, collarless shirt and don-key jacket. Comes with: fish and chips, copy of Sun, pint of bitter. *Says: "Ee ba gum, vote Labour."*

Islington Blairbie
Levi 501s, polo neck jum-per, fleece. Comes with: avocado dip, glass of Chardonnay, Canonbury residents' parking permit. *Says: "Harriet and Charles are coming to dinner."*



Sunday Blairbie
Dull grey suit, college tie, hankie in breast pocket. Comes with: Cherie, Ca-techism, Rosary. *Sings: Gloria in Excelsis Deo.*

Young Blairbie
Grunge trousers, Doc Marten's, baseball hat (re-versible). Comes with: nipple ring, tab of "E" and latest Oasis album. *Says: "Sorted."*

Send now for free catalogue to: "My Little Tony", Tory's-R-Us, New Labour House, New Malden, Essex.

COURT CIRCULAR

ST GEORGE'S, WINDSOR

His Royal Highness, Prince William, will be confirmed today as a much better bet than his father. The ceremony will be conducted by members of the national press who will bear witness that "Wills" is very tall, very good-looking and very likely to be the next King. The Prince *will* be accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince Charles and by the Princess of Wales who will try not to smile too much.

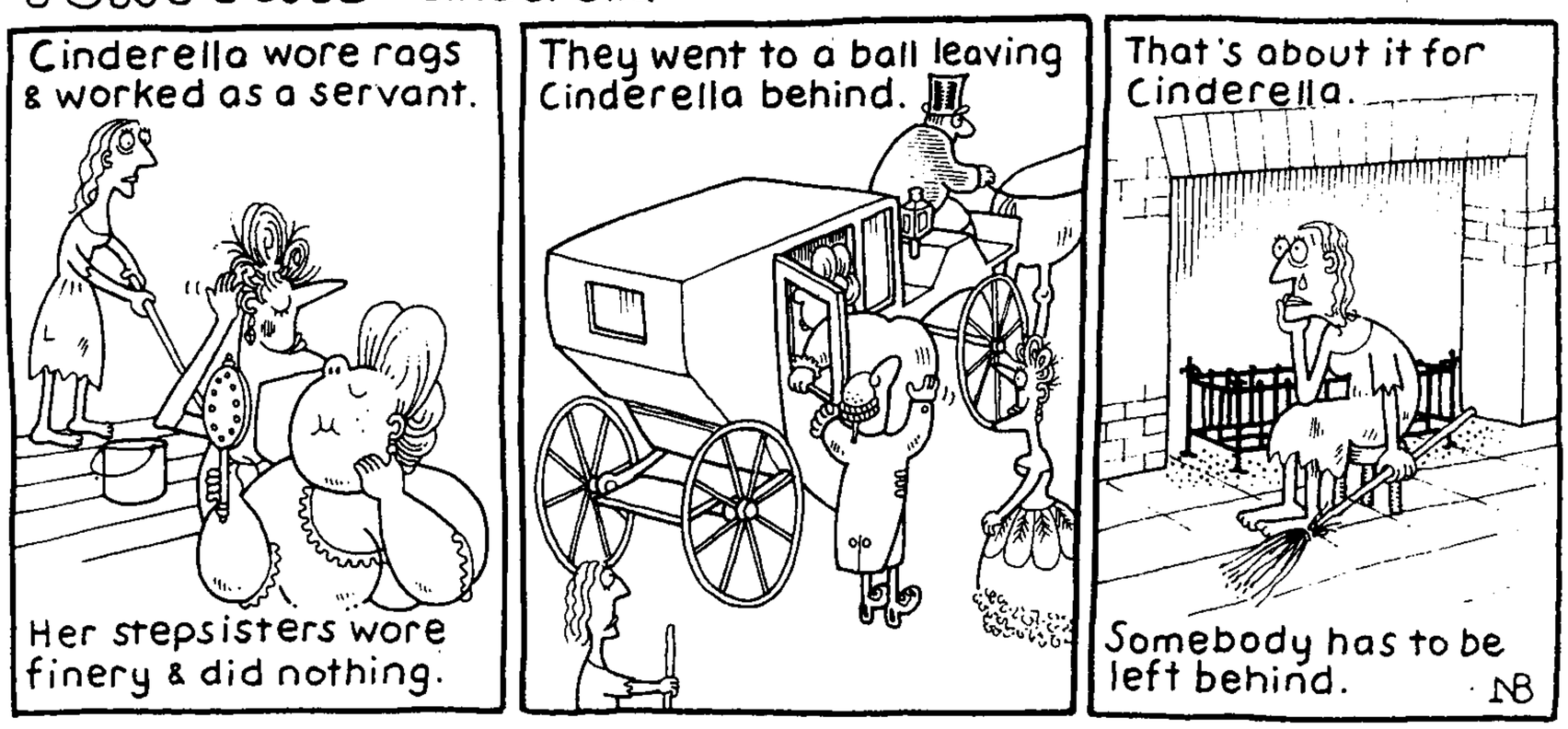
There will be some sort of religious ceremony after the photo-call in which the Archbishop of Canterbury will be deliberately uninvited. His place will be taken in the photos by a man with a beard.

Miss Tiggy Huggie-Leggy-Winkle will be unable to attend the confirmation due to not being asked.

CENTREPOINT, SOHO

Princess Diana of Calcutta will today visit one of her favourite places, the centre of attention, and continue to promote herself as a worthwhile cause *(cont. p 94)*

TORYTIME: Cinderella


Cinderella wore rags & worked as a servant.
Her stepsisters wore finery & did nothing.
They went to a ball leaving Cinderella behind.
That's about it for Cinderella.
Somebody has to be left behind.
NB

WATER 'FULL OF PARASITES' SHOCK

by Our Environment Staff **Sandy Toxic**

HOUSEHOLDS across the United Kingdom were today warned that their water supplies were acting as host to a large number of unpleasant parasites. These creatures are called directors, or *cryptotorius sporadicus*, to give them the full medical name, and they feed on the unsuspecting consumer, doubling their own salaries every ten minutes.

Classic symptoms of their behaviour include the customer becoming sick of the quality of service and tired of the continual rise in water rates.

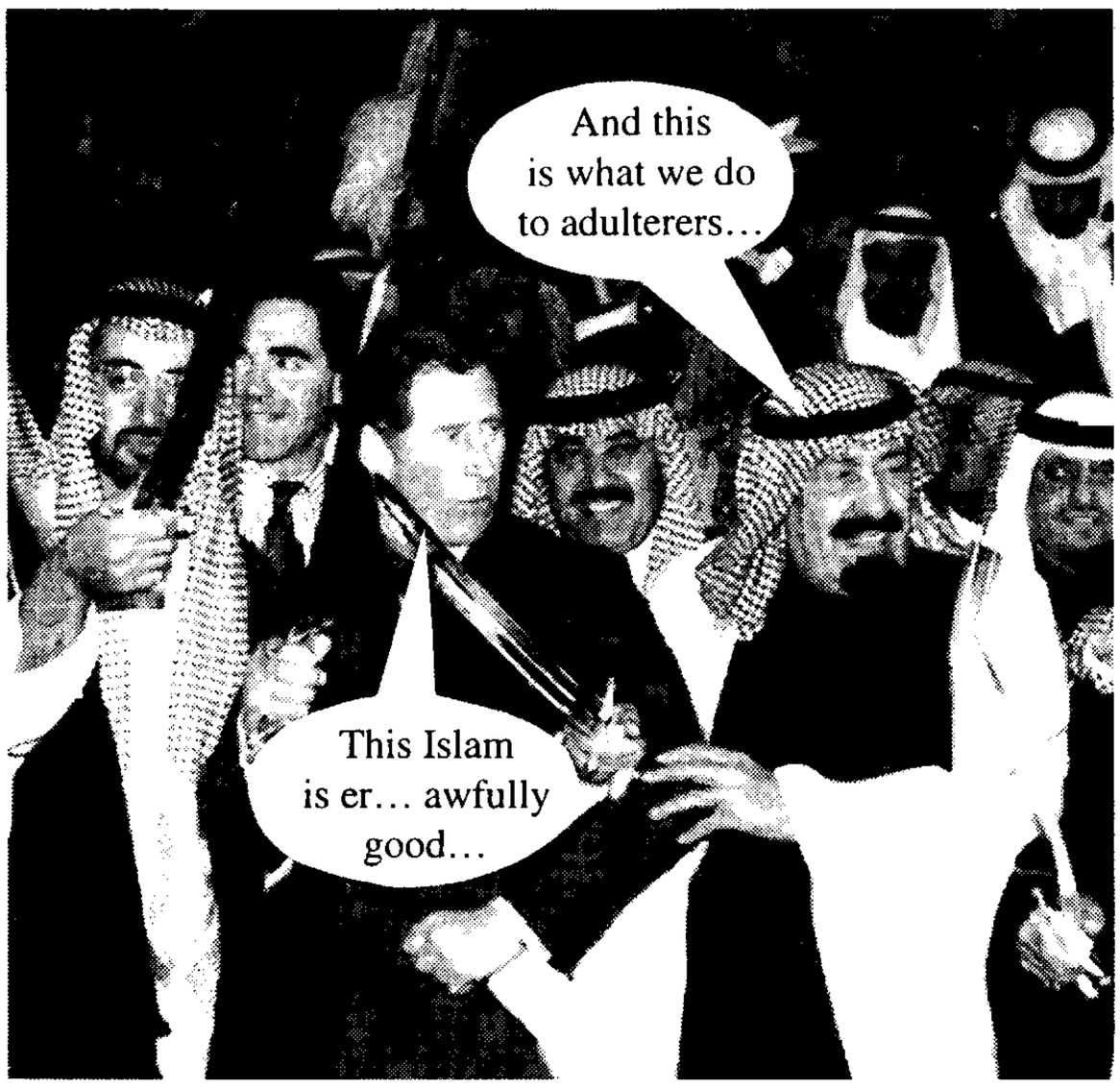
There was, however, some advice for worried households from the regulator OFWAT. "If you are disturbed about these parasites," they recommended, "you should go and boil your heads."

RIO DE JANEIRO (R) — Rio de Janeiro's carnival shifted into top gear as Fonald Fuck, Parrot Joe Carioca and a flood of other Disney characters kicked off the first of two dusk-to-dawn parades by Rio's Samba school elite.

Jordan Times

Harry Enfield's **Class Bores** Drawn by **Michael Heath** **No. 9 The Dinner Party**

"I think Gordon Brown'll make a brilliant Chancellor people say once he's in power he'll get a lot of stick from those on the left but I think he can handle Ken Clarke ha ha ha ha I think he's absolutely right about top rate tax I mean don't get me wrong I know *we'd* all *love* to pay fifty percent & certainly on my income that's a *hellavalot* of money but sadly not all the well off have our sense of social responsibility & like it or not a lot of high earners *would* leave the country I mean when Lawson put the top rate down to 40% in '87 more money came *in* to the Exchequer in *real terms* the facts speak for themselves & we can't deny them as much as we'd like to you know I was asked to direct the next Labour Party Political Broadcast but unfortunately I can't do it as I'm in the middle of shooting a big British Gas campaign we're giving them a whole new image after the PR disaster of their latest Top Brass pay awards it's a brilliant campaign not that I think Gas should have been privatised in the first place but then again you *do* get a much better service than you used to & no one can deny that."



CHURCH AFFAIRS

Carey Lashes Runcie

by Our Religious Affairs Correspondent Lunchtime O'Done

The Church of England was rocked to its one foundation yesterday when the Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey launched an astonishing no-holds-barred attack on his predecessor Lord Runcie.

Appearing on the Harlech TV religious slot "More Tea Vicar", Carey accused Runcie of going on television and making the Church of England look ridiculous.

"We archbishops" he said "have a duty to keep silent if we are to keep any respect at all from our followers (Sid and Doris Churchgoer)."

The present Archbishop went on, "Of course I have the very greatest respect for my predecessor, who has many great gifts. But he has an unfortunate weakness for being indiscreet and making rude remarks about the Royal Family."

Hail Carey

"To describe Princess Diana as a 'dim Sloane' and Prince Charles as 'a woolly-headed New Ager' may be true, but it is not the kind of thing an Archbishop should say on television."

Whose side are you on in the Big Bish Bust-up? You choose. Ring Charles Moore at once on the following number: 0898 26143.

Also in today's Telegraph

Isn't Eton *(surely 'Elton'? Ed)* wonderful? by the Editor **2**
Why Everyone Should Vote Conservative by our fearlessly objective political columnist Boris Johnson (Conservative candidate for Clwless North) **16**

A Taxi-Driver writes

Every week a well-known Member of Parliament is asked to comment on an issue of national importance.

This week **Dave Evans** (Cab No. 4271)

Blimey, I'll tell you who's really stupid, guv. That Mrs Bottomley. Dead from the neck up. That's what I call her. The only reason they give her a job is cos she's a woman. They can't even park a car. Look at that silly cow over there in 'er jeep. And I'll tell you another thing. Them blacks that come over 'ere to live on the social security. Rapists and murderers, every one of 'em. They're all guilty, just like the Bridgewater Five and the Birmingham Three. They

all did it, you can tell. They were all Irish, weren't they? Or black? Or were they women? Anyway, you can't have women in politics, can you? It's never been the same since they got rid of Maggie. God bless 'er. Know who I had in the back of the cab once? Danny Baker. He's a real gentleman. No, he's a very clever man. Do you want a receipt? No, have a load of them, fill 'em in yourself. Be lucky.

NEXT WEEK: **Dave Maclean** *(cab. no. 74317) on why Roisin McAliskey and her baby should be strung up since it is the only language they understand.*

A Doctor writes

AS a Doctor, I am often asked: "Are you HIV positive?"

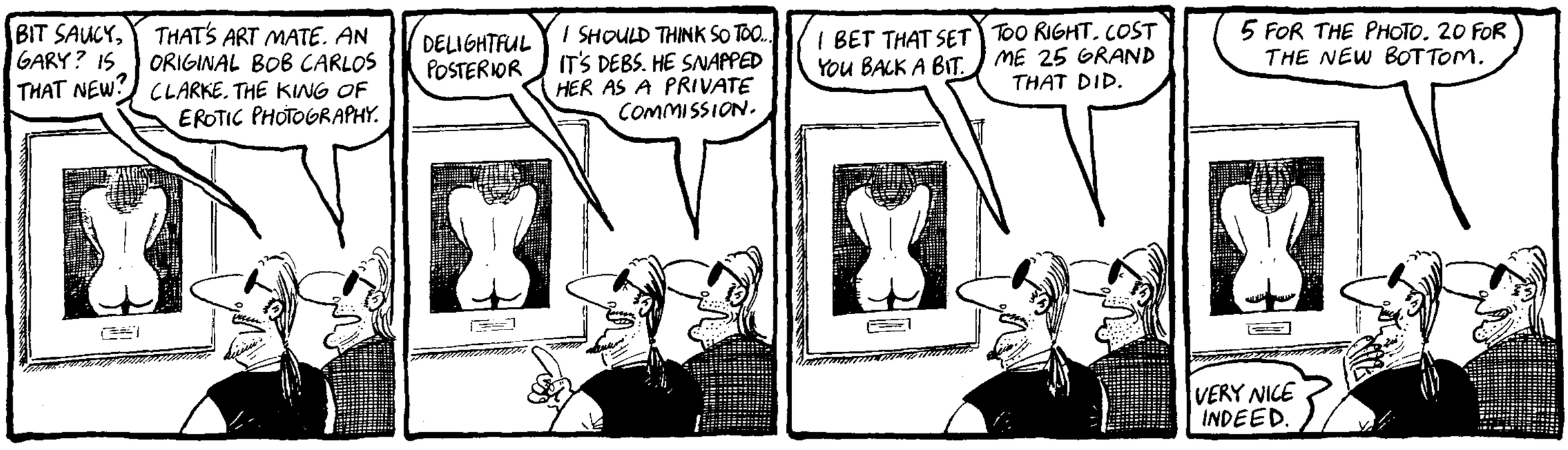
The short answer is: "Yes I am, but I am not going to tell anyone because I would lose my job."

If you're worried about being HIV positive, keep very quiet and then leave the country.

© *A Doctor*

Celeb

LIGGER


BIT SAUCY, GARY? IS THAT NEW?
THAT'S ART MATE. AN ORIGINAL BOB CARLOS CLARKE. THE KING OF EROTIC PHOTOGRAPHY.
DELIGHTFUL POSTERIOR
I SHOULD THINK SO TOO.. IT'S DEBS. HE SNAPPED HER AS A PRIVATE COMMISSION.
I BET THAT SET YOU BACK A BIT.
TOO RIGHT. COST ME 25 GRAND THAT DID.
5 FOR THE PHOTO. 20 FOR THE NEW BOTTOM.
VERY NICE INDEED.

From the Referendum Bunker

No.94

Achtung!

So, Mr Major-Bond, I have some very sad news for you.

Even before the election, I am already winning seats in parliament. Perhaps the name Sir George Gardiner rings a bell with you.

You thought he was one of your most trusty knights. But no. I am afraid Sir George has decided to join the Dragon, and fight for the real England.

Carla, the music please.

(Sultry Italian temptress puts on gramophone record of Elgar's Nimrod)

Yes, Mr Bond, this is the England of old maids drinking warm beer on the cricket field, the England of gnarled yeomen and ancient elm trees and red double decker buses – all threatened with extinction by the armed might of Herr Kohl's panzer divisions as they sweep through the Channel Tunnel, destroying our age-old traditions of free speech by threatening everyone in sight with libel writs from my old friend Sir Peter Carter-Ruck.

(Goldfinger's voice rises to screaming crescendo as record player blows up)

Taki, bring on my new MP.

(Swarthy Greek whistling Elgar's Cocaine Overture leads shambling and decrepit old figure into room)

Gardiner: I now acknowledge that I was completely and utterly mistaken in following the dictates of Majorism. I will now serve only the Referendum Party under its glorious leader, Sir Jammy Goldfishcard.

So, you see, Mr Major-Bond, I now have one loyal MP, which is one more than you have. Heh heh heh. And at least I can say that there are no splits in my parliamentary party. Heh heh.

(Strokes white-haired old MP for Reigate before tossing him aside in piranha tank)

And now I have some entertainment for you, Mr Major. My long-awaited secret video, 10 billion copies of which are to be put through every letter-box in the land. You may not appreciate it the first time. But after you have watched it 500 times, even you, Mr Major, will begin to get the point.

And now I must leave you for a very important rally of 200,000 fish, who have asked me to address them on the threat of Herr Kohl to the Single European Herring.

(Puts on black rubber diving suit and is lowered into underground Marmite lake)

Issued by the Referendum Party of Great Britain

(prop. Sir James UKGoldfinger)

Apparently... BY MIKE BARFIELD

CUCKOO EGG MIMICRY

GOVERNMENT IGNORED 'FILTH' REPORTS

by Our Agricultural Staff **Simon Heiffer**

A NEW row erupted in the Commons last night after allegations that the government had turned a blind eye to successive reports suggesting that hundreds of MPs were covered in all types of "muck, dirt and sleaze".

Said an opposition spokesman: "For years these MPs have been wallowing in their own filth and no one has done a thing about it. Now the MPs are about to be slaughtered, but it is far too late."

Faecal Attraction

Last year, it was revealed, a detailed report by Lord Nolan drew attention to the conditions in which these MPs had chosen to live and recommended a massive clean-up. But the report was ignored and nothing was done.

Another inspector, Lord Scott, came to similar conclusions in his report, naming dozens of the members most contaminated by their own excrement.

But once again the warnings were not heeded and the public were put at risk of serious contamination by being brought into contact with these unclean animals.

LATE NEWS

The cull for the diseased members of parliament will take place on May 1st at selected centres up and down the country.

(Reuters)

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

MORNING
MORNING NAOMI
OFFICE
GOD AM I TIRED !!! BIG SHOOT YESTERDAY.
MANAGED TO BAG 3 SILVER FOXES, 4 SEALS, AND THIS GORGEOUS MINK.
PETA
I'D RATHER GO NAKED THAN WEAR FUR

Lines Written On The Investiture of Sir Paul McCartney OM as a Knight of the Realm

by William Rees Maccagonagall

'Twas in the year nineteen hundred and ninety-seven
That the great Paul McCartney thought he had gone to heaven
When he was summoned to the Palace by Her Majesty the Queen
In a chauffeur-driven German-made limousine.

Incidentally this was not the first time that Paul had set foot in that hallowed place,
But on the previous occasion his visit had ended in disgrace.
For when he, along with his fellow Beatles, received the MBE
They afterwards boasted they had smoked cannabis in the Royal WC.

In those days Sir Paul cut a very different dash.
He spent most of his days making cakes filled with hash.
This was whilst recording songs like Let It Be
Whilst under the influence, it was claimed, of LSD.

But then young Paul embarked on a search for Nirvana
Which led him to India but not to Ghana.
He sat at the feet of a bearded holy man
Who told him "Hand over as much money as you can."

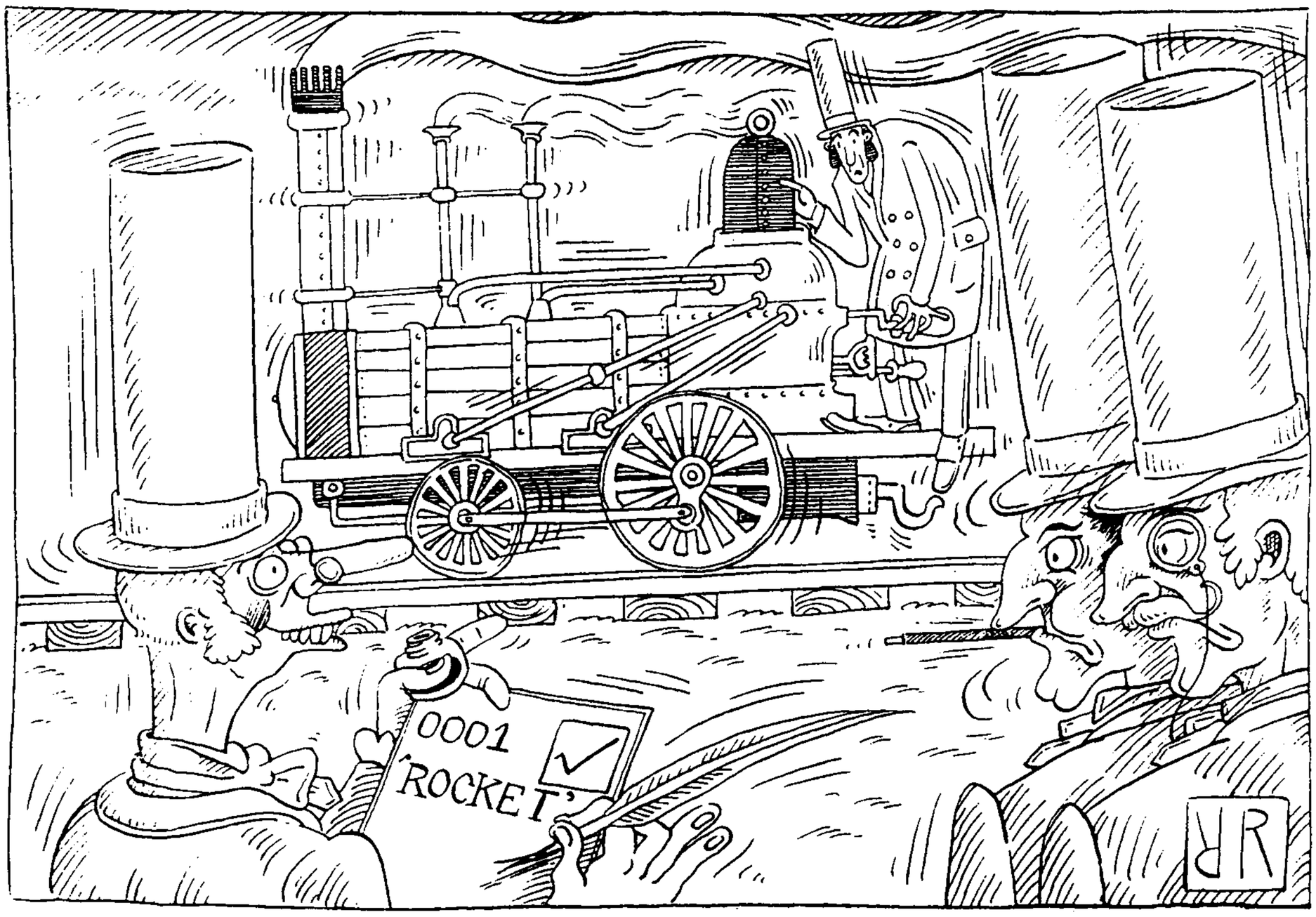
While he sat at the Maharishi's feet
He decided it was time for him to stop eating meat.
And thus he met the woman who was to become his wife
And they agreed to eat vegetarian burgers for the rest of their life.

Thus reformed, Paul settled down near Rye
To live off his royalties which were considerably high.
Here he farmed in an environmentally-friendly style
While songs like Mull of Kintyre continued to add to his pile.

And so it came to pass that in Paul's old age
The nation came to see him as a venerable sage.
And Mr Major, hoping to win the next election,
Included Sir Paul in his New Year Honours selection.

The Queen herself dubbed him with her shining sword
(Though Lloyd-Webber did better and was made a Lord)
But alas for John Major, despite creating Sir Paul,
On May first, he still ended up getting no votes at all.

©W. Rees-MacGonagall



Great Moments in Trainspotting History

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam: Terry Nation, Creator of the Daleks

So. Farewell then
Terry Nation.

Creator of the
Daleks.

Now you
Have been
Exterminated.

No disrespect
Intended.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

Literary Review

Anon Starter

Lila Says
(Fourth Estate, £9.99)

THERE have been a lot of scare stories among the uglier mugs of the literati in recent years about an alleged trend towards pretty-face publishing. It has been suggested that commissioning editors, when they invite a young novelist in for a chat, are primarily checking their level of chat-show glamour and dust-jacket pulchritude. The popular moan of the unpublished is that you have to be a babe to get published these days.

In fact, like most conspiracy theories, this one is way behind the times. The really smart move for a prospective author at the moment is to have no face at all. The biggest American literary novel of last year was *Primary Colors* by Anonymous. Although a naughty hack later exposed the writer as Joe Klein of *Newsweek*, publishers were astonished to discover just how much coverage you could get with no author to be photographed or interviewed or trade quips with Letterman. Indeed, what excited the media was the very facelessness of the product. The book business has always claimed that it was interested in finding unknown authors. Now the quest had a new twist. Every editor dreamed of turning up an author who would remain unknown.

Even before *Primary Colors*, this development was becoming inevitable. There had been signs that author hype was faltering. Although newspapers can still be relied upon to fall for a good sloucho-to-Groucho literary success story — Teacher Lands £200,000 Advance, Traffic Warden Sells Book To Spielberg — and these lightning-struck writers are virtually guaranteed a *Daily Mail* interview on publication, it's becoming pretty clear that these campaigns don't always translate into sales. Numerous talked-up novels of the 90s — Phillip Kerr's *Gridiron* and *Esau*, Carol O'Connor's *Mallory's Oracle*, Nicci French's *The Memory Game* — subsequently turned out to cause surprisingly little trouble to the compilers of the British bestseller lists. Overloaded with hyped authors, the industry was obviously in need of a new kind of writer publicity.

Lila Says — hot and hyped from Fourth Estate this month — is a perfect example of anonymity chic. Originally published in France, where it caused a sensation, the book is supposedly the work of a "semi-educated" 19-year-old poor Arab boy living in Paris. A note from the French publishers records that the "two red notebooks with squared pages" were passed on "via a lawyer. The author, Chimo, the name that appears in the text, wishes to remain anonymous. We have never met him and know nothing about him".

The increasing legislation of modern society has been much remarked and it's certainly coming to something when semi-educated teenage Arab boys have their own lawyers. Unable to discuss the editing of the handwritten manuscripts with the author — it seems that textual queries could not even be passed through his lawyer — the publishers indulge in arch footnotes about the sexy imperfections of the text: "The final two paragraphs were written in the margin of page 50 of the second notebook without any indication of where they belong. We have placed them arbitrarily at the end of this chapter".

As well as having a good lawyer, Chimo also demonstrates, for a poor street kid, an impressive familiarity with trends in modern fiction. *Lila Says* is a short erotic fantasy, which, if the author wasn't "semi-educated", you would take as heavily influenced by Alina Reyes' *The Butcher*, Nicholson Baker's *Vox*, Susannah Moore's *In The Cut* and other clit-tit successes of recent years.

Chimo, the narrator, meets Lila, a teenage blonde who, introducing herself with the words "Want to see my pussy?", pours out her sexual fantasies to the boy, permitting him to take part in some of them. Apart from his erotic education, Chimo is kept from hopelessness by the dream of being a writer — he has made himself a desk from stones in a Paris ruin — and writing the book we are now reading. The novella ends in tragedy.

Did a teenage street-kid write this? The book feels far more like the kind of text-game that might be played by a disciple of Derrida or Baudrillard. The references consistently seem wrong. There is a reference to the luxurious sanctity of airports: so Chimo has air-miles as well as a lawyer? Elsewhere, he notes: "The other day on the telly this white-haired Canadian said we can expect to find billions of inhabited worlds in the universe." Is this the frame of reference of a poor Arab kid or an academic pretending?

Perhaps one day the mask will be removed. But the publishers will hope it's not until *Lila Says* has made a splash in its various foreign translations. This new trend means, of course, that young people will have to abandon their traditional dream — of becoming a well-known writer and seeing their name on a book — in favour of a new one: becoming an unknown writer and not seeing their name on a book. But then, if the novels are anything like *Lila Says*, who would want to own up to them?

Books & Bookmen

☐ JOHN "Hitman" Holloran did what Reed is paying him to do last Friday when he broke the news to some 45 of Reed's 80-odd employees that their services would not be required at Random House, the new owner of Reed's Heinemann, Secker, Methuen and Mandarin imprints.

He was not hired to be Mr Nice Guy and wasted no sensitivity on Reed staff: he made them queue up to be summoned to his office, where he cursorily informed them whether they were in or out.

Strangely, Holloran himself does have feelings. Distressed at the hostility of his victims, one of whom asked if he was getting any kickbacks, he escaped from the building as soon as his job had been done.

One Reed casualty was Max Eilenberg, the former academic in charge of Secker. The joining of Secker to the Cape list at Random House reunites it with its previous publishers, Dan Franklin and Robin Robertson, who do not think highly of Eilenberg's abilities.

■ MEANWHILE at increasingly Random House, Juliet Annan yielded her position as rights director to become publisher at Viking, where her first priority is to find an energetic director for the literary imprint Hamish Hamilton. Clearly rights directors are now vying with fat sales and marketing wallahs to run publishing houses, or run them into the ground. Anything, presumably, better than having editors in charge.

But the most surprising news of the last two weeks was that the sale of various bits of Reed to Random House took so long to go through. Much of the legal argument which exercised great minds (eg, Simon Master of Random House) concerned how many and which Reed imprints should be included in the sale. This was because of the variegated, not to say haphazard, way some of them came into the hands of first the great Paul Hamlyn, and later from him to Reed Elsevier.

The reason the sale should *not* have gone through was because Random House will now have a monopoly of the leading literary publishing imprints in the land, including Jonathan Cape, Chatto & Windus, Bodley Head, Hutchinson, Methuen, Heinemann, Sincere-Stevenson and Secker & Warburg. Authors' choice of publishing house is further diminished because, in effect, the Random paperback imprints — Vintage, Pimlico and Arrow — will decide what should be published.

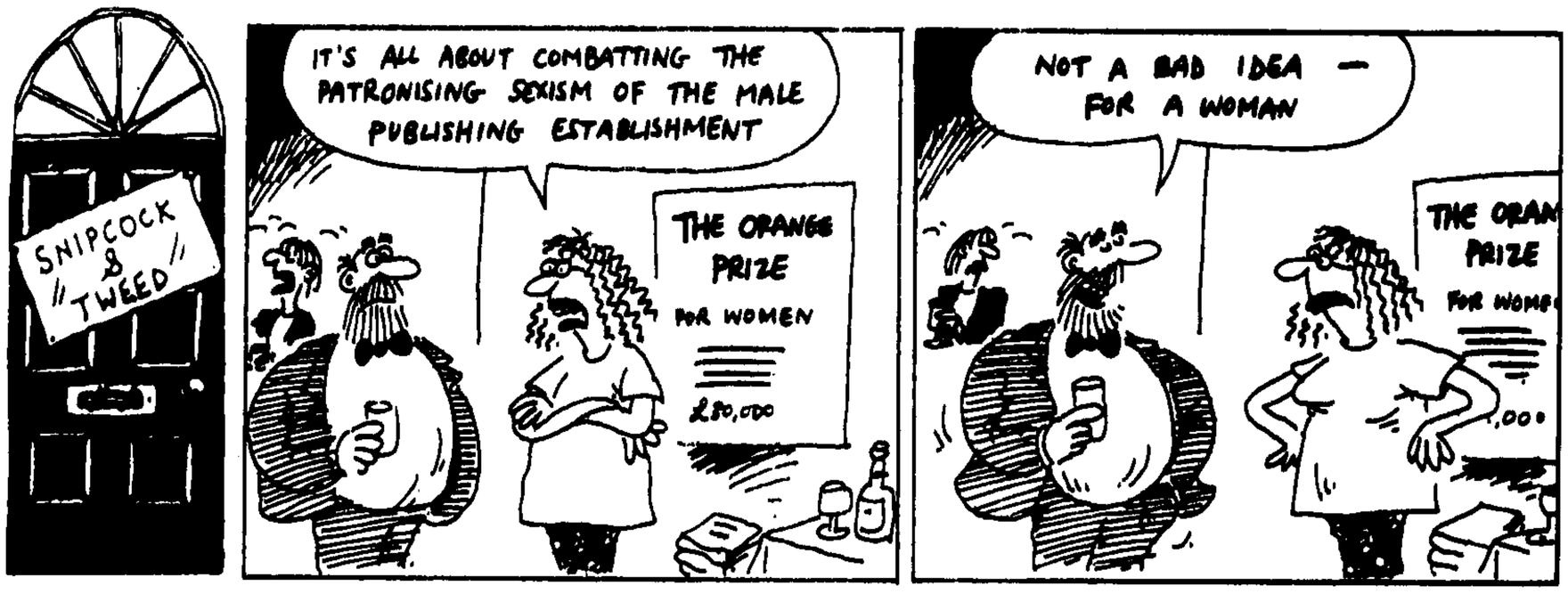
☐ *MARJORIE SCARDINO, much-hyped new chief executive of the Pearson group, has been forced to write off 40 percent of 1996's profits — £100m — thanks to a rogue employee at Penguin Books USA, who was caught giving massive but unauthorised discounts to customers if they paid their bills promptly.*

Scardino has tried to gloss over the fiasco by sending out jovial memos to her staff reassuring them that "Penguin always was, and still is, a wonderful company". A memo on 13 February ended with this jolly exhortation: "Don't worry. New brooms sometimes have this effect."

Pearson's incredibly brilliant finance director, John "On the Make" Makinson, has also escaped any blame. In a memo to Pearson staff on 6 March, he dismissed the £100m cock-up as an "isolated incident".

● **WHOOPS! Bookworm has been reliably informed that Jon Riley, the celebrated publisher of Picador, did not as previously thought aspire to take over Peter "Eeyore" Straus's old job as editor-in-chief at Macmillan (the position which has gone to ex-rights queen Clare Alexander, late of the Penguin pool).**

'Bookworm'



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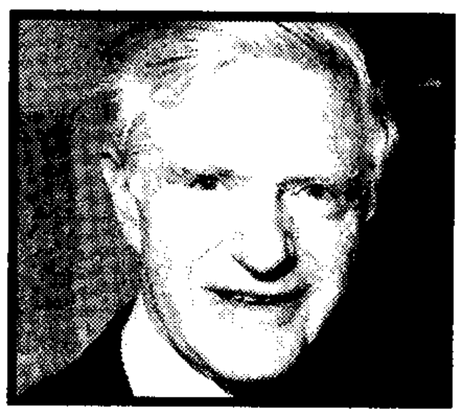
NOMURA MR NICE GUY?



SIR TOMMY MacPHERSON CBE

Grim news from the big Japanese investment bank Nomura Securities has been greeted with blind terror at the ministry of defence, which has just flogged the biggest property portfolio in British history to Nomura.

On 6 March Nomura admitted "apparently irregular payments" to an unnamed corporate investment client, and went downhill fast. On 10 March Japan's leading asset management firms suspended business with Nomura Securities, and the following day Nomura shares dived to their lowest in four and a half years.

Who could have detected anything wrong in January when Nomura Securities reported a profits rise of 69 percent? The *Daily Telegraph* ascribed the success of the company to "the performance of Nomura International, its London-based headquarters, which has had a very successful six months, particularly in asset securitisation".

The outstanding example of this "asset securitisation" was the decision of the MoD and defence secretary Michael Portillo to sell almost all the married quarters occupied by the armed forces families in Britain to a consortium led by Nomura International. The House of Commons defence select committee reported last month:

"The acquisition has been underwritten by Nomura International, an English-registered independent subsidiary of the investment bank, Nomura Securities Co... Nomura International holds warrants for some 75 per cent of the equity... These warrants... provide Nomura with a controlling interest in the company... We note with concern that the successful bidders are controlled by an overseas bank."

For rather obvious reasons, Nomura International was anxious to disguise its Japanese origins from the bid. So it formed a complicated cluster of companies, gave it a good Anglo-Saxon name (Annington) and appointed as chairman and deputy chairman of Annington Homes Sir Tommy Macpherson CBE, 76, formerly of the SAS, who has as many military medals as he has seats on big business boardrooms, and Sir Sandy Hunter, a former air vice marshal.

Both are expected to work for Annington at least one day a week, for which they are paid annual salaries of £45,000 (Sir Tommy) and £37,500 (Sir Sandy). When, last 13 November, the Commons defence select committee wanted to question Annington, the company sent along Sir Tommy and Sir Sandy. There followed what the report described as "the most embarrassing session experienced by the committee".

Though both blimps insisted they were entirely independent of their Japanese parent bank, they obviously knew very little about the structure or control of their group. Question after question was referred to Mr Guy Hands of Nomura who kept passing them on to a man at the back. Finally, exasperated, one MP demanded that the mystery man come to the front. He turned out to be another Nomura representative, Mr Chris Patrick, and even he had to correct some of his answers with subsequent memos.

All in all the committee wasn't at all impressed with the two military knights or their alleged independence from the bank. Their worries were compounded by their discovery in another session, when the blimps were absent, that the ministry of defence has paid £72m — the equivalent of eight months rent for only five months use of the quarters.

HOGG & HOGS

■ THE system of paying public sector pensions through a government department run by the paymaster-general has been running efficiently for most of the century with hardly a complaint from any of the millions of pensioners, or 650 staff, at Crawley, Sussex. So obviously it had to had to be privatised quickly before the general election.

The problem was that nobody wanted to buy. At last, a couple of the government's favourite companies were persuaded to take over the agency provided the government sold it for next to nothing. The government minister concerned was mega-rich privatisation fanatic Philip Oppenheim, so there was no problem. There was no tender or pretence at competition; and on 13 February the whole Paymaster Agency was knocked down to EDS/Hogg Robinson for a ludicrously low £22.7m.

VERY MERRY: *Chairman Perry*

Mr Oppenheim reassured pensioners they were now in "highly professional hands". EDS is well known to *Eye* readers as a company which gets into trouble with formerly public agencies almost as soon as it snaps them up for next to nothing.

Anyone who wants to know more about Hogg Robinson should read "swindlers' list" — the recently-leaked roll call of companies which used a new Tory law to swindle occupational pensioners into private pensions which guarantee them a much lower pension. The government watchdog PIA insisted two years ago that the companies should compensate the pensioners they swindled by the end of 1995. When no one in the industry took any notice, the deadline was switched to December 1996. Then "swindlers' list" was drawn up and leaked. The worst record for compensating pensioners was held by, well, you must have guessed it by now... Hogg Robinson! Out of 14,000 swindled pensioners identified as priorities, Hogg Robinson had managed to finish compensating, er, one.

None of this has had the slightest effect on the vast fortunes of Hogg Robinson's directors, which are determined by its remuneration committee chaired by former Tory MP Sir Robert McCrindle. The "performance bonus" for chairman Brian Perry was raised from £40,000 last year to £240,004, bringing Mr Perry's total "emoluments" for 1996 to £555,605. Nor have his pension contributions been swindled. They are up 50 per cent, to £24,000.

WINKLEY WANKLEY

■ REMEMBER COPEX and its litigious boss Julian Winkley, who replied to public criticism by issuing libel writs? Both have got a thoroughly deserved drubbing.

Winkley and his firm organise friendly exhibitions for small arms and surveillance and crowd control equipment. In 1995 they put on a special show at Sandown Park race track. This provoked protests in *Sporting Life*, which called the exhibition a "torturers' Tesco", *Peace News* and the Campaign against the Arms Trade. Several Quakers wrote or phoned Sandown Park to complain. The only reply they got was a libel writ from Copex.

As soon as he was ordered to disclose details of the companies which paraded their wares at his exhibitions, Winkley tried to drop his own actions. The *Sporting Life* case came to court in January last year and collapsed. Costs were awarded against COPEX.

Winkley promptly resigned as sole director and tried to wind up his company. He was stopped by the Inland Revenue who were worried about unpaid taxes. In July Winkley's libel actions against *Peace News* and the Campaign Against the Arms Trade were also struck out. Winkley again tried to pretend his company did not exist. No luck. Last month he threw in the towel and paid the two organisations their £32,000 legal costs.

As the old proverb has it: the shit who lives by the writ dies by the writ.

Beak of the Week

Mr Tom Lomas JP, Wigton

THE CASE OF VISCOUNT WHITELAW.

DRIVING back from his golf club last November, Whitelaw's Range Rover shot out of a junction into a main road smashing into a BMW, turning it over, and fracturing the sternum of the BMW's passenger, Margaret Bayliss, who is still in great pain. Lord Whitelaw was treated with the respect due to a former deputy prime minister. He was not breathalysed. Wigton magistrates (chairman: Tom Lomas) fined him £75 and ordered him to pay £40 costs. In similar circumstances, elderly drivers are often instructed by magistrates to take a new driving test – but not in this one. Lord Whitelaw is 78.

HANRATTY: SOME JUSTICE AT LAST

THREE HANRATTYS AND THEIR FRIEND: Michael and Brian (back), Darren and Dawn

LOYAL *Eye* readers may recall the curious story, published here in July 1993 (825), of Michael, Darren and Dawn Hanratty, who with their friend Brian Bradshaw were involved in a tussle with the forces of law and order in south London.

The four young people had been arrested and charged with public order offences and assault after a fracas outside a pub with officers from Catford police station. In the station, Michael was asked whether he was related to James Hanratty, who was hanged in 1962 for the A6 murder. "Yes," Michael replied, "he was my uncle." He gave his christian names as Michael Joseph. A witty police officer changed the second name to "James" and Catford police station echoed with laughter at the tasteful joke.

When the case came to court, the police said they had been called to a pub after a complaint about after-hours drinking and had been threatened, bitten and kicked by the four young people outside the pub. The accused told a quite different story. They said they were leaving the pub normally and peacefully when one officer had made an offensive remark at Brian Bradshaw, who is black. Dawn Hanratty had replied hotly, and the four made their way down the street. Suddenly they found themselves being grabbed from behind and attacked by police officers.

After hearing the evidence of the officer in charge, Inspector Peter Sturge, and several of his merry men, the magistrate David Fingleton concluded that their evidence was inconsistent and tainted by their breaking the rules of evidence in talking to each other in the lunch interval. He dismissed the case. The young people walked free from the court and the three men sued the police for assault, false imprisonment and malicious prosecution.

The case was heard this month before a judge and jury at Wood Green crown court. After hearing their full story from Michael, Darren and Brian — and then a very different version of events from Inspector Sturge and eight of his officers — the jury found for the three plaintiffs on all three counts and awarded them total damages of £27,100.

The Bank That Liked To Say Goodbye

■ THE unmitigated disaster of the privatisation of the Trustee Savings Bank is slithering to its sad ending — accompanied as usual by the sumptuous enrichment of its directors.

The TSB had to be privatised 10 years ago because although it was popular and more successful by any measure than its high street competitors, it was owned by its depositors and thus had no shareholders.

This intolerable state of affairs was dealt with firmly by greedy directors backed by a determined chancellor of the exchequer Nigel Lawson, and top judges in the House of Lords who decided the bank was owned by "the state" and so could be privatised. The chief argument for the privatisation was the "boost" it would give to "competition in the banking world". (For the full horror story see the recently-published *A Stake in The Future* by John Plender, pp 174-180).

SIR NICHOLAS "GOODIES" GOODISON

The result was a glamorous flotation which left the bank with many millions of pounds of new shareholders' money which it didn't need. The money was promptly wasted on a series of doomed and ridiculous takeovers (Hill Samuel bank, the Target group, etc) which brought the TSB to the verge of bankruptcy. A new set of "responsible" directors were brought in to save it. These included Sir Nicholas Goodison, who collects Ormolu clocks and is a former chairman of the Stock Exchange; Peter Ellwood; Hugh Freedberg; and J.K. Elbourne. The situation at TSB was very serious. The usual mass sackings and the dismantling of the bank's much-admired regional network was not enough. The only salvation the directors could devise for the new competitive privatised bank was to sell it to one of its main competitors. Accordingly, TSB was flogged off to Lloyds.

PETER ELLWOOD

The new accounts for Lloyds/TSB spell out some of the directors' rewards for this momentous achievement. J.K. Elbourne has to go. He's got £215,000 for loss of office and a payment of £470,761 to allow him "to obtain a pension exceeding the maximum pensionable salary allowed under the TSB scheme". Hugh Freedberg has to go. He got £290,461 for loss of office and £657,000 so he can get a pension over the maximum allowed to common-or-garden TSB types. Sir Nicholas Goodison is still there. He got £301,000 last year plus £59,000 lobbed in for his pension. Peter Ellwood is still there too. He couldn't possibly cope on his basic salary of £300,000. So he's pocketed "other benefits" of £679,000 under a scheme which "allowed certain senior employees of TSB to benefit from movements in the price of the company's shares". On top of that he got a "performance-related bonus" of £200,000, and another profit-sharing bonus of £30,000, bringing his total for 1996 up to a tolerable £1.2m.

Over ten years of Lawsonry, a popular and thriving bank has been downsized, ruined and swallowed up. But not everyone has suffered.

NO NEWS FROM SIN BRYNS

■ EVEN the foreign press, especially in France, is taking more of an interest in the Waterhouse inquiry into child abuse in north Wales than the British nationals, which have effectively stopped reporting it.

The silence has helped to sustain the widespread claims that the whole affair has been exaggerated by whingeing former children from the underclass who are out for compensation.

The story unfolding at the inquiry, however, is very different. In his enormous opening address, counsel to the inquiry Gerard Elias QC revealed that his inquiry team had decided not to rely solely on people who had already complained of abuse. The team identified "a random sample of 600 children in care in the two counties (Gwynedd and Clwyd)" most of whom had never before been interviewed or made any claim for compensation.

When the inquiry started, more than 10 percent of these people had been seen, and more are making statements every day. Mr Elias said a small number of these "now do raise complaint". He went on: "They have not been motivated apparently by money, publicity or any external encouragement to complain". He concluded: "It may be thought that they add powerfully to the contentions of those who say abuse did take place."

This cautious opening has been confirmed several times by representatives of the "random sample" who have backed up the claims of abuse at the three homes where abuse was most widely alleged: Bryn Estyn (138 complainants); Bryn Alyn (96); and Tyr Felin (85).

The biggest problem for reporters is the tight ban on naming almost anyone who has not been convicted. This can lead to wide discrepancies in the reportage. For instance on 5 March the *Western Mail* carried the headline: WITNESS CLAIMS EX-POLICEMAN ASSAULTED HIM. The report continued: "He (the witness) alleged in evidence yesterday how he had been indecently assaulted by a former policeman." Even so vague a term as "former policeman" worries reporters on the case case it brings on a complair contempt of court for ider an alleged abuser. So in other reports published "former policeman" b simply "another ma

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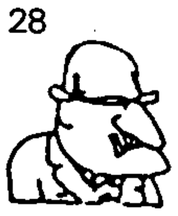


In the City

ONCE again it seems the septic Channel island of Jersey is to suffer a blow to its much boasted squeaky clean image as a "respectable" offshore haven as yet another investment adviser goes under with clients and local police in hot pursuit.

Raymond Bellows ran two Lavy Hancox companies handling OPM (Other People's Money): Lavy Hancox Trustees, based in Jersey; and its stable mate Lavy Hancox Management, registered, interestingly enough, on the nearby tiny rival haven of Alderney, which is ambitious to create its own financial services sector. It is clearly off to a good start. Both Bellows companies are now "en desastre" as they quaintly describe bankruptcy in Jersey. Debts are estimated at a minimum £1m each, with £10,000 in assets. Bellows himself has also gone under estimating his debts at £1.8m although he says he has assets worth £1.3m.

Jersey fraud squad has launched an investigation which has already unearthed that Bellows was handling the clients' cash through perhaps as many as 40 companies, suggesting the liabilities could be much greater once those clients realise what has hit them and file a claim. On past record, however, many will take the hint and stay silent. The reason? "Black money", whose existence is unknown to tax authorities outside Jersey.

Bellows is a former associate of another Jersey "desastre", Peter Tregunna, whose PKT Consultancy collapsed in 1987 owing £1.1m. Bellows had resigned some months before the crash, and Tregunna died in curious circumstances not long afterwards. He had fallen among thieves before his demise, becoming hooked up with the share ramping operations of international fraudsman and Mafia associate Thomas Quinn, whose shadow currently hangs over Solv-Ex, the favourite stock pick of Morgan Grenfell's bad and mad Peter Young.

Following so soon after the belated decision to prosecute over the £16m supposedly invested by Robert Young (no relation) in foreign exchange deals, the Bellows collapse confirms once again how little oversight Jersey really has over those who use its haven status to attract international investors. Bellows is the fifth investment adviser in as many years to go belly up under the noses of Jersey's so-*called* regulators.

These same regulators have a list of some 20 to *30* companies suspected of involvement in criminal activities. Despite having such a list, however, to date the watchdogs have done nothing to close down any of the suspect companies. But then that would be to confirm what law enforcement agencies around the world already know — and the smug local politicos deny that Jersey is a soft touch for dirty money.

Ask the Italians. Investigations into the offshore machinations of former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi and his companies have already revealed a significant Jersey connection. Jersey has also featured in a recent Milan trial arising from the collapse in 1982 of Roberto Calvi's Banco Ambrosiano.

Accountant Tony Delaney, jailed for six years in 1993 after his company collapsed owing clients more than £1m, was involved in producing false documents to prove Fabergé and other antique jewellery had been bought with $10m of Ambrosiano cash. The jewellery was supposedly bought and resold by a Delaney company at false valuations acting for Italian restaurateur Marco Ceruti. The documents were a sham designed to hide the true purpose of more than $5m paid to Ceruti by Licio Gelli, the head of the influential P2 Masonic Lodge and the power behind Calvi. Gelli claimed he was buying the jewellery from Ceruti. Italian investigators suspected the money was being laundered to be used to pay bribes to judges and others.

Two of Delaney's associates, Jersey company manager Neville Munson and lawyer Frank Hogart, who has offices in Jersey and a home in London, have recently been convicted in absentia by the Milan court and given jail sentences of one and two years. Just how the ever-watchful Jersey regulators will respond to that news remains to be seen. But don't hold your breath.

Meanwhile, in case Jersey's closest rival Guernsey is basking in these little local difficulties, its equally Sleepy Hollow regulators will no doubt wake up at rumours that there could be an up to £100m problem inside the local offshoot of a London bank. Doubtless such stories are exactly that.

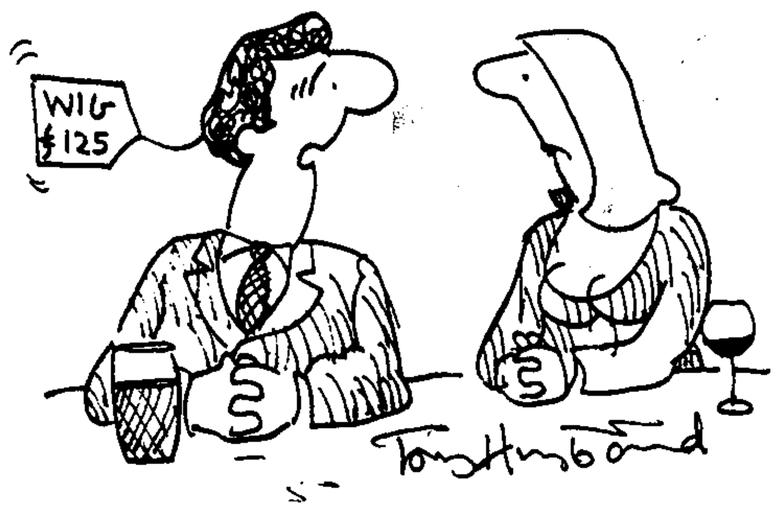
THE choice of Rosalind Wright as the new face at the Serious Farce Office received a warm reaction. Somewhat surprising, as the 54-year-old Wright is hardly the new broom the SFO badly needs, more a recycled brush.

But then the word from those who selected Wright was that — despite the obvious shortcomings of appointing a civil lawyer, George Staple, as her predecessor — criminal prosecution experience was not essential! Wright, as the hacks dutifully reported, indeed has criminal prosecution experience. But it was a long time ago.

She moved from the not exactly highly rated fraud investigation group (FIG) at the crown prosecution service (CPS) in 1987, just as the SFO opened, to first the Securities Association and then the Securities & Futures Authority (SFA) where she has been involved in regulatory and disciplinary actions as chief lawyer. It was because of the failures of the director of public prosecutions (DPP), where Wright had been before transferring to the newly created FIG in 1983, and the limitations of FIG that in 1986 the Roskill commission recommended creation of the SFO.

Another DPP alumnus is none other than the hero of the Roger Levitt plea bargain Fred Coford. Furthermore, the Wright-run Lloyd's prosecutions over the Minet and Alexander Howden frauds were hardly triumphs. Peter Cameron-Webb and Peter Dixon escaped justice largely because the prosecution took so long to get together that extradition became unlikely and the case was dropped. The Grobfather Kenneth Grob was acquitted along with Ian Posgate. As for Johnson Matthey, a series of minnows were tried but the big fish escaped — including their accomplices inside the failed bank. Guinness was a result, at least as far as Ernest Saunders and his main share supporters were concerned, but by then it had been taken over by the SFO.

Wright may have won out as the "safe pair of hands" Whitehall so loves. But on the record it is a far from inspirational choice. And she arrives at a time when the SFA itself has been strongly criticised for failing to nail the top two suits at Barings — Peter Baring and Anthony Tuckey — in the wake of the Leeson scandal and taking too long to do too little over their underlings. A failure emphasised by the decision of the Department of Timidity & Inaction to target Baring and Tuckey for disqualification orders. Hardly a good omen for a more hardball policy at the SFO.



"Oh my God... how can you tell it's a wig?"

ONE of Wright's first decisions after she takes over next month may be whether to prosecute NatWest dealer Kyriacos Papouis over the little matter of his and the bank's £90m derivatives loss.

Papouis clearly expects the inspector to call as he has hired Stephen Pollard of Kingsley Napley, one of the better readers of the fraud game despite playing a losing hand with the equally creative and bonus hungry Nick Leeson.

Exactly how a jury of *Sun* or *Star* "readers", despite Wright's wishes the most likely tribunal for such a trial, would be able to understand what bemused and bedazzled NatWest's highly paid executives and auditors remains a mystery. Another case of none so blind as those who will not see what gets in the way of bigger and better bonuses.

Perhaps a good one to take the civil route now touted as an option, and leave for Wright's old friends at the SFA to handle by way of expulsion from the Temple of Mammon.

CAPITAL CORPORATION's Gary Nesbitt looks likely to have his work cut out to fend off the bid from London Clubs for his two casinos. Not only is there the matter of price but there is some heavy black propaganda working against him.

Anonymous whisperers suggest there may be more skeletons than just the little matter of his exotic wine purchases for the company which resulted in heavy losses. It is suggested — no doubt maliciously and incorrectly — that questions should be raised about internal controls at the casinos in the wake of one small and possibly a previous very large gaming coup that may have had inside help.

Questions are also suggested on how staff pensions were handled, even though no loss has been suffered. Finally there is the content of the reports into the company by private detectives Network Security, accountants Price Waterhouse and a gaming consultant. All are said to make very interesting reading but remain unpublished.

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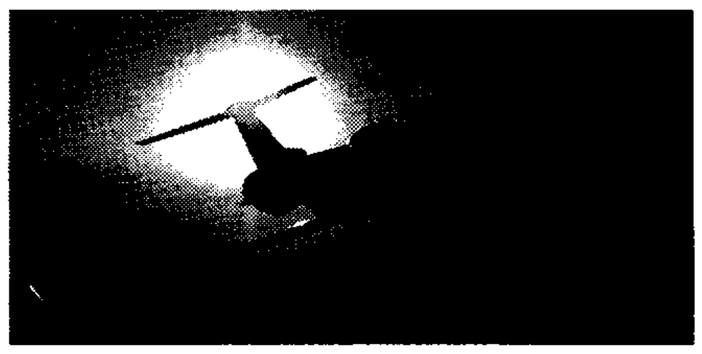

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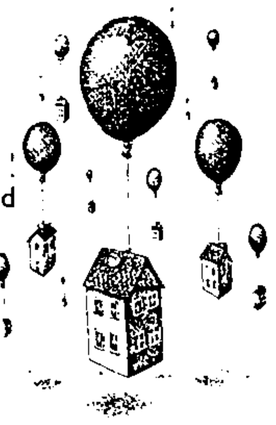

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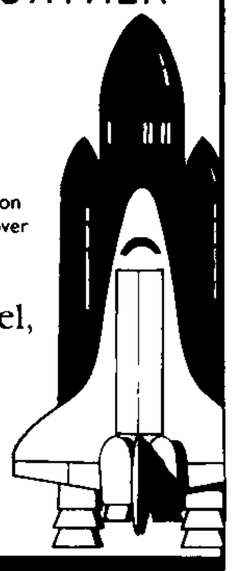

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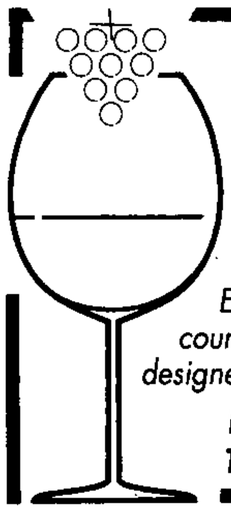

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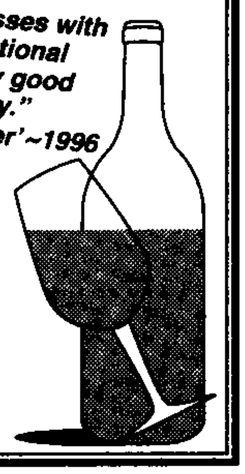

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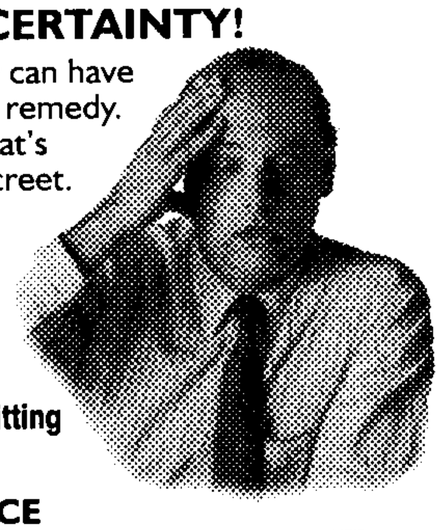

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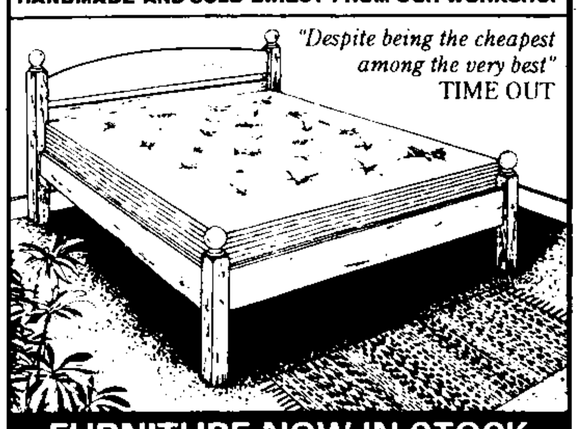

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2. Personal Information

Marital Status: Single ❒ Divorced ❒
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Age:_____ Height:_____

Occupation: _____

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Build: slight ❒ medium ❒ large ❒

Attractiveness:

Very attractive ❒ Attractive ❒ Average ❒

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Technical Qualification ❒

4. Your Personality

(tick which traits closely describe you)

❒ Affectionate ❒ Fashionable
❒ Serious ❒ Practical
❒ Considerate ❒ Conventional
❒ Shy ❒ Reliable
❒ Romantic ❒ Adventurous

5. Your Attitudes

(tick for yes, cross for no or leave blank if you don't feel strongly)

❒ Do you prefer town life?
❒ Do you involve yourself with community activities?
❒ Do you have many friends of your own sex?
❒ Are you interested in current affairs?
❒ Are you looking for one special relationship?
❒ Do you like team activities?
❒ Does your work make it difficult to meet new people?
❒ Do you feel resentful when forced to act quickly?
❒ Do you want to extend your social life as well as finding a special relationship?
❒ Do you devote a lot of time to your social life?

6. Your interests

(sections 6. and 7. Please tick for a liking, cross for a dislike or leave blank for no pref.)

❒ Wining/Dining ❒ Jazz/Folk music
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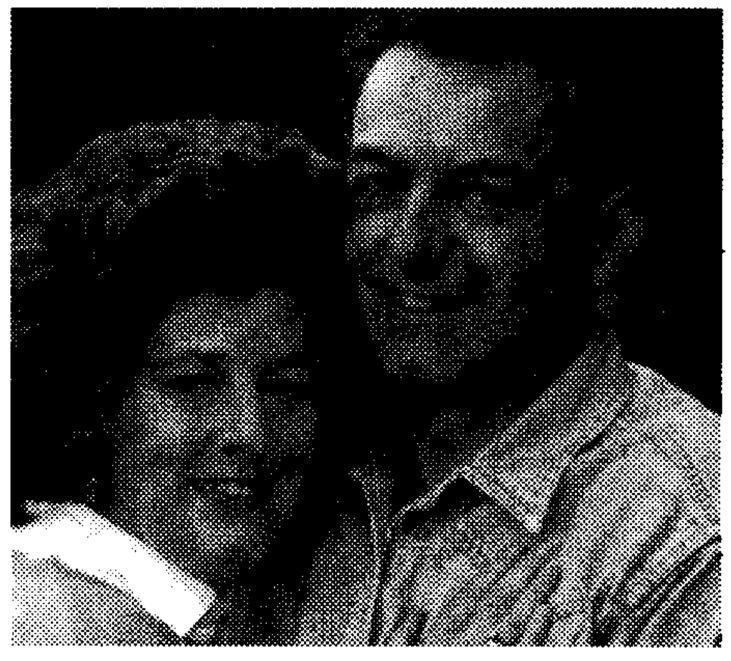

7. Details of the partner you would like:

Minimum age:_____ Maximum age:_____

Height: min._____ max._____ Don't mind ❒

Marital status: Single ❒ Divorced ❒
Widowed ❒ Separated ❒
Don't mind ❒

Build: slight ❒ medium ❒ large ❒

Attractiveness:

Very attractive ❒ Attractive ❒ Average ❒

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